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TAKING THE LITERARY PULSE

TAKING THE LITERARY PULSE

PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDIES OF LIFE AND LETTERS

BY

JOSEPH COLLINS

AUTHOR OF "THE DOCTOR LOOKS AT LITERATURE," "THE WAY WITH THE NERVES," "MY ITALIAN YEAR," "IDLING IN ITALY," ETC.

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To

ROBERT G. ARMOUR
EDMUND M. BAEHR
C. BURNS CRAIG
ALEXANDER H. WILLIAMSON

FOUR YOUNG COLLEAGUES WHO, WHILE AIDING ME IN A LABOUR OF LOVE AND A MISSION OF MERCY, HEARTENED AND DIVERTED ME BY TALKING BOOKS

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TAKING THE LITERARY PULSE

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I

PURITY AND PORNOGRAPHY

§ 1

IF one should drop into this country from Mars or fly to it from a land in which American papers and magazines are unknown, he might easily believe that we are deluged with pornography, that we are constantly debating what we shall do to be saved, and sporadically trying to make laws that will spare the coming generation contact with lewdness, obscenity, and immorality in literature. He would not be further from the truth if he believed himself in heaven.

There have always been in the world persons who think they are their brother's keeper, who would like to be, and who strive to be. There have always been others who are convinced they know more about matters that are unknowable, such as destiny and how to prepare for it, than their fellows of equal original endowment and of greater opportunity for enlightenment, and they deem it their mission to make their fellows conform to their beliefs by exhortation or legislation. They parade their honesty, praise their sincerity, preach their purity, and pretend that their efforts are for the public welfare.

One of their beliefs is that they know good and bad, proper and improper, salutary and pernicious literature and that they

can force their judgment upon the public by legislation. The most naïve reason they give for their activity and ardency is that they want to protect their children. To make the state share the parents' responsibilities may lessen the burden of parenthood but it is doubtful that it will improve the child's chances.

There is no doubt that some writers set out deliberately to produce pornographic and lubricitous literature, but I am convinced that many books that get a repute for raciness would fail to do so were it not that publishers convey by innuendo or misleading statement the suggestion that the book is what is popularly called "hot stuff." They would seem to harbour the delusion that naughty books pay and that the public yearns for them. They refuse to be lessoned by Harold Bell Wright and Zane Grey.

I could readily name books that have no literary merit and no claim to artistry that would never have entered the best-seller group had it not been for the publisher's cupidity. The question of censorship for books will be solved more quickly and readily if publishers cultivate an *esprit de corps* prejudicial to puffing putrid literature. And it would be to their advantage and our comfort if they would take a stand on profanity in their publications. Writers have been encouraged to be profane by hearing laughter in the audience whenever an oath is uttered on the stage, and loud laughter should it come from the lips of a woman. Authors lacking humour now sprinkle their text with oaths. Some of their paragraphs read aloud sound like the production of a grammatical Billingsgate fishwoman. There are few who can make themselves more emphatic, dogmatic or dramatic by using swear words. Of all ejaculatory utterance in fiction profanity is the most unnecessary.

It is defended by a few writers on the ground that the author should be free to reproduce realistically and honestly the current speech of the day. Whatever merit this plea may

have, it should be noted that profanity has been current in the speech of all generations and countries and that which has come down to us as really great literature survives for quite other reasons than its vulgarity of language. It would be well for some of our younger writers to reflect upon this significant fact.

The war is responsible for many wounds of the spirit. Before the war a man did not call another by a name that tattered his mother's virtue unless he was prepared to fight, but in the Army it became interchangeable with *"vieux," "comare,"* and "old dear," and now it is creeping into literature usually in phonetic spelling. If editors are not watchful soon a certain kind of writer will be insisting that the word and its feminine equivalent be printed in capital letters.

We all know books that are replete with statements and descriptions of bodily functions that most persons do not talk about save to their doctors and nurses. Viewed from the social standpoint, they are not fit subjects for general discussion, but from the artistic point of view the matter presents a different aspect. Literary artists are dealing with the stuff of life, with people's genuine thoughts, emotions and conversations, not with their censored thoughts, their sterilised emotions, their affected conversations, and they are dealing with the intimate things of life, not those of the public square. It becomes a question how far the writer may go in revealing these thoughts, portraying these emotions, repeating these words. I am in favour of giving him great latitude. I am always suspicious of the morals of him who professes to be shocked by such revelations. The individual who would be willing to get along without Rabelais would be willing to eat his food without salt, at least he says he would, but I should not trust him when he dines alone.

The whole question of indecency in writing presents many difficulties, especially when it comes to the setting up of censorship. For example, the indecencies of one generation are

the decencies of the next and vice-versa. It is nearly two hundred years since Congreve died and the thunder of Jeremy Collier's denunciation of his obscenity, immorality and profanity has scarcely ceased to reverberate; yet I read Congreve to-day and am no more shocked than I am by Arnold Bennett, and I have never heard it hinted that he was a pornographist.

We are bound to go through a period of professional purity and piety in this country. Thus do we mask the scars received in wooing and winning wealth. Material prosperity engenders the reformatory urge. The rich man convinces himself that his sins will be forgiven him if he will save others. He thinks he can save them by legislation, but when the honest expression of man's normal cravings and his desires shall be regulated by law we shall be intellectual dependents and our mental and physical virility will not be worth saving or safeguarding.

Like the poor the reformer is always with us and likely he will be till the end of time. There is small hope of curing him so he must be endured. But one has the right to ask why we are being reformed, or threatened with reformation. Let us admit the existence of obscene books. Let us admit further that they are written and published deliberately and purposefully to appeal to the lewd and lustful in man. Let us go the whole way and admit that the writer is not concerned in the least to produce a work of art; that he knows nothing of form, less of technique and is ignorant of the word sensibility. There must be few such books, but granted there are some and that they reach the bookstalls. Whom do they harm and how is it accomplished? I can speak only for myself and for those with whom I have come in intimate contact.

Having spent the better part of thirty years in close association with those whose emotional and mental balance is easily disturbed, I may claim to have special knowledge of emotional and mental instability. Having diligently searched all that time for the factors that disturb the balance, and having

earnestly sought to discover and apply those that restore it, I may also claim a small measure of expert opinion. One of the alleged causes of disturbed emotional and mental balance is erotic and pornographic literature. It would be as absurd as it would be untruthful to deny that certain contacts of the sexes, and description of them, excite human beings to wantonness and lubricity, but it is the truth to say that I have not encountered during my professional life a potential neuropathy or psychopathy that was made actual by reading lewd and lascivious literature. I have never encountered an individual who admitted injury from reading obscene books, looking at indecent pictures or listening to erotic music. Strangely enough, the emotionally and mentally unstable seek philosophic, not pornographic, writings. I have seen many minds disintegrate apparently under the influence of Kant, Spinoza, Nietzsche, not to mention the exponents of occultism, mysticism and new thought, but I have never seen a mind break up while being fed on Aretino, Rabelais, or Paul de Kock. When men and women become insane, they sometimes make extraordinary pictures and write salacious stories, but such conduct testifies their insanity.

My experience convinces me that elderly impotent men, mature men hopelessly stuck in onanistic sloughs, women entangled in lesbianism, and moral imbeciles are the chief readers of pornographic literature. When the average, sensible, moral, decent man or woman comes upon a book like the "Ragionamenti" or the "Satyricon," he puts it down in the same involuntary but determined way that he turns aside when he comes upon animals in the throes of conjugation, or upon other disgusting sights. Children who do not realise the full significance of the occurrence stop and gaze and here and there a bad boy uses it to motivate lascivious thought, then and after. A modest girl represses the sight that has filled her with shame, but the majority are simply sorry, just as they are when they have inadvertently stepped into a puddle or a

sewer. If the country were flooded with obscene literature, I believe that Poe and Whitman, Hawthorne and Emerson, Tarkington and Lewis and scores of others would push it out into the deep sea. Every generation and people gets what it wants. We do not clamour for pornography, and if the purity bloodhounds would stop yelping it would vanish before the strongest force in the world: public opinion.

I can no more imagine the hypothetical person here called the average decent man or woman, reading "Ouha" for instance than I can imagine him getting pleasure watching hogs rooting the soil of their styes on a hot, humid, rainy day. Some people go to executions; some men don top-hats on Sundays; others like to go to funerals. There is no accounting for tastes. Some like to read about the transports of love and lust, but their yearnings testify their poverty; they are unable to get thrills and transports the way nature intended they should get them.

Most of the erotic and pornographic literature is written by individuals whose genesic instinct is deficient or distorted, but there are a few sincere, simple souls, in this country, and in every country, I fancy, who believe they have a God-given mission to tell the truth about sex, and what repression and indulgence does to the individual and what it threatens to do to the community and state. In reality the motive to tell about it is founded in what they think it has done to them; some of them tell physicians about it, others write books. The more they base their knowledge on their own experience the more detailed and dogmatic they are. Why the district attorney should be influenced by purity leagues and watch-and-ward organisations to forbid their sale is more than I can understand. Nothing can prevent the sale of them so effectively as trying to read them; a person who finds Jonathan Edwards's sermons too stimulating for night reading will go to sleep gently and blissfully reading "Janet March."

I find it diverting to read Ulysses's account of his adven-

tures as he narrated them in the hall of Alcinous; amusing to accompany Casanova on his amatory excursions; amazing to tarry with Cellini in the Castello or in the work shop; instructive to visit hours and days with Saint Simon and marvel at his political insight, social discernment and character clairvoyancy; stimulating to hear how Cardinal de Retz accomplished so many feats of gallantry and intrigue. But it bores me nearly to death to accompany Mr. Grover Cleveland Harrod to Bermuda or to hear the reasons why Roger Leland would not go back to Plainsburg either for his father's funeral or to claim his inheritancy, and I should rather live in Paterson forever than to spend an hour in Coney Island with Harold Prewett and Campaspe, Bunny and John Armstrong.

My idea of condensed punishment is to read a novel, by a sexual neurasthenic, based on fact; and of condign punishment to read one of sex-perversion by a pervert. Psychopathic novels by potential or convalescent psychopaths interest the decadent, the disequilibrated and the radical, but they distress and disgust most intelligent readers. When I need to go beyond my own confines for introspective analysis, the "Meditations of Marcus Aurelius" and the "Confessions of St. Augustine" suffice. "The Soul of a Child" seen through the eyes of an introvert is too blinding a sight for me.

Why does not some one come forward and say that he or she was hurt by reading a lewd, obscene or lubricitous book? Jean-Jacques confessed things that are infinitely more humiliating and his reputation has not suffered. I have read "bad books" all my life and I can call witnesses to testify that after each reading, I was more beholden to morality, abstract and concrete. How can one who volunteers to safeguard our morals know that reading a so-called "bad book" will not make one more moral? How can he possibly know that it will undermine one's morality? Why is he so anxious to save me and why should he not be content to save himself and those to whom he owes a responsibility?

Hell has gone entirely out of fashion during my lifetime and chiefly because my forebears were overfed with it. We may rid ourselves of pornographic literature in a similar way. It will scare a few to death, meanwhile, but they die in a good cause.

It is interesting to observe what has happened in other countries—especially in the country that has a reputation for producing and disseminating "bad" books, France. It must be kept in mind that what is "bad" in one country is not "bad" in another. If an American publisher were to put out a literal translation of "La Mia Vita in un Raggio di Sole" by Guido da Verona, the most widely read Italian novelist of the present day, Mr. Sumner would represent public opinion. England sent Henry Vizetelly to jail for three months for publishing a translation of "La Terre" but Zola did not disturb Gallic equanimity until he backed Dreyfus.

France has a reputation for producing and enjoying lewd literature. Viewed from a very narrow angle she seems to deserve it but fundamentally it is false, and nothing proves this more conclusively than her post-war literature. The vast majority of it is singularly free from display of lust or incitations to lust. This is particularly striking in the books that have been submitted for, or have obtained, one of the many prizes offered every year by academies, enterprising publishers and publicity promoters.

Oftentimes the intervention of the censor in France has hastened recognition of a book's merit, as in the case of "Madame Bovary" and "Mademoiselle de Maupin," or facilitated the sale of a novel without merit such as "La Garçonne."

We suppressed "Jurgen" until England showed us how stupid it was to do it, and we are still too puritanical to sell openly "Susan Lennox," a story that should take its place beside that of Mary Magdalene. I never see Correggio's St. Jerome or a copy of it, with its portrait of the Magdalene whose face and attitude are so divinely expressive of all-em-

bracing love, without being reminded of Susan Lennox. That is a sample of what bad books do to me!

The real truth which many thinking people are coming to see is that legal repressions of normal instincts are disastrous. Psychology and neurology have long been aware that the damming up of human emotions is not only ineffective but produces other evils in its train that are worse than the original fault. The problem, of course, lies farther back than any mere censorship of adult action, whether in literature or elsewhere. Wise educators and doctors and clergymen to-day know that the real work to be done is in the instruction of youth. And in that field, despite the revolution that has taken place in the intellectual and physical world about us, we are still ignoring the great problem that shames modern education by its age-long neglect: the failure to deal frankly and honestly with the sex question in the formative years of a child's life. Out of that hypocrisy grow most of our modern evils of censorship and legal repression. And that deserves discussion here.

§ 2

The generation of man now at its apogee has witnessed many marvellous changes. It has seen the ultimate constituents of matter resolved into units of positive and of negative electricity, protons and electrons, and it has conceived the whole diversity of the world as due to varying combinations of them; it has seen the ether of the earth begin to yield its secrets and throw off its disdain; it has seen the dawn breaking on a diseaseless world and the recognition of the rights of man to live healthily and happily; it has heard the message, Peace on Earth, Good-will toward Men, which has heartened us for two thousand years, denied and derided. Countless epochal events have dropped the scales from our eyes and overcome the blindness imposed by ignorance and superstí-

tion. One of the results is that the human body has regained some of the prestige it had in the days of Praxiteles. We are neither ashamed of it in repose nor embarrassed by it in action. Though it is not yet given the esteem and regard it deserves, no one viewing life retrospectively can doubt that the day of scorn of the flesh, contempt of the body, disdain of its normal cravings and denial of its legitimate desires is fast disappearing, and with its disappearance goes the monstrous delusion that the soul profits by studied contempt and pitiless humiliation of the body.

We are beginning to realise that our creative capacity is the most godlike possession we have, and we are proud, not ashamed of it. We dare to believe and to say that the scene in the Garden of Eden was symbolic and that original sin was the first bogeyman.

We shall not get our sex slate clean until we teach our children the truth about sex in the same way as they are now being told the truth about history. They must be told when they first become concerned with sex—that is, when they become sentient organisms. They cannot take in the whole truth then; it must be modified as their milk is, but it should contain the necessary number of emotional and psychical calories, and it should be palatable and assimilable.

Who shall teach them? Who knows the truth? Has it ever been formulated? Would not formulation of it be opposed to the principles of Christian ethics? Who knows the truth about history, the false teachings of which are held by many to be the chief cause of world wars? How are nations going about it to purge their text-books of false statements and frame those consistent with facts acceptable to the whole world? Physicians should know the part that aberrations, inversions, humiliations of the genesic instinct and perversions of its conspicuous function play in the causation of unhappiness, inefficiency, disease. But do they know it? Does not truth compel us to admit that the average physician knows no more

about it than the average layman? The neurologist knows, and it is his duty and privilege to share this knowledge with his fellow-practitioner and urge him to co-operate in the instruction of actual and potential parents, pedagogues and priests.

What does the parent, solicitous for the spiritual and physical welfare of his offspring, determined to do everything that he can for its benefit, do now? He tells his child that it is injurious to masturbate and sinful to conjugate. He does not know that either statement is true. He has heard or read the former and his spiritual adviser has told him the latter. He knows, in all probability, that as a child and youth he sought and obtained vicariously or unnaturally appeasement of sexual desire, and he considers himself one of those who was fortunate enough to be absolved from paying the penalty.

He understands the seventh commandment to apply to the joined and the unjoined, and he would that others should obey it. He has no intimation that a considerable proportion of human beings come into the world with partially or completely inverted genesic instinct, and that the sanest and wisest minds of the past three thousand years have agreed that measures should be adopted to direct this endowment toward the heterosexual goal. It has never occurred to him that the plan, the mechanism, the operation of the genesic instinct, is one of the profound complexities of nature, and that its subjugation and artificialisation has been one of man's strifes and pleasures for countless generations. He does not tell his child that there has been vouchsafed to him the most wondrous possession of the world—the capacity to create human beings. He does not point out to him that the prelude to such creation is the most ennobling and soul-stirring event that the human organism can experience, that the act itself links man with God and fulfils His command. He does not reason with his child to convince him that a sensible and sane person does not drag his most treasured possession in the mud; does not insult, out-

rage and maim his most faithful and valiant aid; does not ruthlessly throw to the dogs the treasure that he has inherited and which he was created to conserve and perpetuate. He does not seek to convince him that it has been the consensus of opinion of wise men, men who have lived during those centuries in which progress that transcends understanding has been made in every field of activity, that such contact with the opposite sex should be under the seal of matrimony and that the family is the institution of which the world is proudest and which will last the longest. He spends infinite pains and money to teach him to dance, to play games, to prepare for college; but he considers that a few minutes' talk, in which he warns him of the "nastiness" of masturbation and the "danger" of sexual intercourse, is sufficient to orient him in the chief problem of life. He himself has realised that the aim of life is happiness and that the way to ensure it is to fulfil one's somatic and spiritual destiny and help others to do the same. That, I take it, is what Christ meant when He said that to love your neighbour as yourself is the greatest of all commandments. Despite this knowledge, we studiously neglect to instil into our children's minds the facts which, with health, are the pediments of happiness.

We take the greatest pains to select our supreme court from the wisest and most just lawyers of the land. They interpret the law, they pronounce upon its constitutionality. We spend countless millions framing, interpreting and administering such law to protect our persons and our property. We have no law-makers or interpreters of our personality and our spiritual property. Should any one say we have the Church, I would ask him what instruction in biology and psychology its servants receive and what they offer save the word of the Master and of Paul? Does any one maintain that the world could be administered to-day on the rules or laws laid down by them? Why should we expect that the spirit can be thus

administered? Is evolution only of the body and not of the spirit as well?

There should be committees in every state drafting plans for the best way to teach children about sex; what to tell them and how; what to show them and when; what means should be utilised to keep presenting the complexity of the subject to the childish mind as it goes from bud into flower. These plans should be submitted to a supreme court made up of psychologists, biologists, priests, pedagogues and philanthropists for interpretation, simplification, and practical application. Children should be taught the truth about sex with the same thoroughness as they are taught the multiplication table, and some means must be devised for early detection of those who have the misfortune to be born into the world with inadequate, perverted, inverted and excessive genesic endowment. They must be picked out with more care and discrimination than are the "atypicals," constituting the "unclassified" of our public schools.

The truth must be told about the effect on the mind and the body of sexual indulgence. Maiden ladies of many years and repressions should be barred from teaching "sexology" in girls' schools and colleges, and male teachers whose conception of orienting boys and young men in sex life is by companioning them with the bogey man of disease should be eliminated. The physician must speak from the point of view of one pledged to safeguard his fellows' health. If it is his conception of his part to speak from the moral standpoint as well, then he may do so.

The problem is a tremendous one, but no problem is ever solved, save by accident, until it is fairly and squarely stated. This problem is of infinitely vaster importance to the world than the malarial problem was when Ross attacked it twenty-five years ago, after Laveran, barely a generation before, had shown it to be dependent upon a parasite, and after Manson

had suggested that the mosquito was the bearer of the parasite to man. It is of vaster importance because it concerns the whole world. We cannot expect the state to solve it until private and unselfish interest shows that it is solvable.

If we are to cure inadequacy, overcome inefficiency, thwart misery and promote happiness we must teach children that their sex endowment is their proudest possession. Parents must charge themselves to safeguard it so long as they are dependents; and, as an earnest of the light that has been vouchsafed them, they must counsel their progeny when they come to the age of reason how this possession may be enhanced and retained.

We solicit the aid of the novelist and story-writer: they can help enormously by telling the truth about sex and how its impulses sometimes master its possessor. They should cease saying, by direct statement and by implication, that in the presence of temptation, particularly sex temptation, there is neither desire nor capacity to resist, that we are all shorn Sampsons. The history of the world and the lives of countless men and women deny it. They can help also by denying the too prevalent assumption that sex is the axis around which the individual revolves and that sex indulgence is his chief object and most determined aim.

II

SOPHISM AND MR. SHERWOOD ANDERSON

MR. SHERWOOD ANDERSON has now passed the creative years of life; he is forty-six. Anything that he may do from now on will be a rehash of what he has thought or done. He will be an interpreter, not a creator.

The unenlightened reader might easily gather from reviews in some of the newspapers and magazines that a new force, a novel sensibility, had forced its way into American fictional literature with the arrival of Mr. Anderson. Those who are oriented in literature by magazines which are "different" gain the idea that a new planet has appeared in the literary firmament which radiates life and love of such intensity that other planets are eclipsed. The enlightened reader yawns a little on reading the pronouncements of the first, and smiles when he encounters those of the second. He then turns to Trollope or Arnold Bennett, Ibsen or Dostoievsky, Hamsun or Stephen Crane, Oppenheim or Fletcher, Edith Wharton or Willa Cather, or scores of others and gets from them emotional condiment and intellectual pabulum that he can savour, digest and assimilate. He leaves the new sensibility and the dazzling lights to those who have their reward in recognition of their own superiority.

Mr. Anderson is no exception to the rule that a man is what he is from his heredity and from his environment. His heredity is Puritanic, his environment the Middle West. He deludes himself with the belief that he has escaped the tentacles of the former, and he plumes himself that the burnishings of the latter have given him the right to prophetic utterance about future America and Americans.

There are two trends in fiction at the present day, both in

Britain and in America. One concerns itself with sex-perversion, the other with sex-obsession. Mr. D. H. Lawrence is at the head of the former school, Mr. Sherwood Anderson, of the latter. They are both artists. They both have capacity to deal with words as Manet dealt with pigments. It is inevitable that they should produce works of art. Neither their contemporaries nor posterity should be denied the pleasure, or even the profit, of their endowment. Some concerted effort on the part of their admirers should be made to convince the former that the aberration which he has seen fit to deal with so extensively is older than civilisation, has always existed, and is likely always to exist, and that nothing is to be gained by describing its manifestations or attempting to forecast its trends and possibilities. If it is an aberration that the majority of the world believes should be overcome, prevented, eradicated, then the legitimate way of going at it is to discover its cause. This is a problem in biology and although the writer of fiction may be helpful to the biologist, up to now he has not shown himself to be a coadjutor. The latter should be told that there is no such thing as a "sex problem"; the features of a problem it may seem to present to the individual with myopia or paranoic trend, have been given it by reformers. Both these writers confuse two things: the statement of a problem and the solution of it. Only the former concerns the artist; the moment he enters upon the latter he becomes an advocate, a partisan, a reformer, an uplifter; and these rôles are inimical to artistry. Sex is an integral part of human life. Without it life would cease to exist in a very short time. But it is not the whole of human life any more than the gasolene in the tank is the whole of the machine that transports us from London to Paris in two or three hours. There are other constituents of the airship as worthy of consideration and quite as essential as the gasolene and which excite one's admiration perhaps even more. In human life we call these factors by different names: truth, beauty, humour, spirituality,

SHERWOOD ANDERSON
Photograph by *Alfred Stieglitz*

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and we believe they play a very important part in the history of every individual. But Mr. Anderson concentrates his attention on one fact. He comes to us, in the manner of one who has a divine mandate, to disseminate what he considers the truth about sex and with the same determination and assiduity that Paul had after his experience on the road to Damascus. But after two thousand years' deliberation there are millions of individuals in the world capable of thought and reflection, amenable to reason and to learning, who are convinced that there are other forms of belief consistent with their intellectual endowment and who ask only that they be allowed to possess their faith in peace and that Christians do the same.

Mr. Anderson is like a man who believes he has an important message to deliver but who stammers when he begins to speak. The stammering at length becomes so rhythmic and musical that many of his auditors are fascinated, though they have no glimmering of what he is struggling to say. As Mr. Anderson himself laments somewhere: "It is a terrible thing to speculate on how man has been defeated by his ability to say words."

At times I have thought that Mr. Anderson has no idea what he is trying to say or to do. That is, I have been inclined to take him at his word; but that he is obsessed with the matter of sex seems only too obvious.

There are many guises in which sex-obsessed fiction presents itself, but none is more pernicious than that known as the Freudian psychology. Freud and his disciples have had their day in court and the jury is now "out" discussing the verdict. While we are awaiting their report any one is permitted to express his belief as to what it will be. It will not be wholly unfavourable to the Freudian. The merit of Freud's contribution is that it has emphasised the value of what may be called involuntary or unvolitional acts, gestures and reactions. It has suggested that we should not believe what people say to us, but rather that we seek the truth of

their sensations and thoughts in unconscious gestures and words which escape them. This combination of distrust and intuition, of which Freud has endeavoured to make a scientific method for exploration of the unconscious, has value as a probe, a diagnostic procedure in the hands of the physician, and it has value for every-day psychological observation, the novelist's pasture. Psychoanalysis as a means of combating nervous diseases is a failure. Nearly twenty years' trial of it entitles me to an opinion, and to a judgment. But the dissolution of Freudianism will not divest us of the incubus which it has pressed down upon us. It was not a blanket thrown over our heads that nearly suffocated us, it was a germ with which our system was insidiously inoculated. The result of that inoculation was to spread throughout the world a rumour that man is the slave of his fundamental instincts or urges, the creative, the protective and the herd urges; that behaviour, no matter how it is ornamented by convention or elaborated by desire, is merely animal behaviour; that there is one law for man and beast, the law of the beast; that love is not a passion that brings out man's nobility, it is an appetite, like hunger, that must be appeased. The perniciousness of such teaching is manifold. During the past year or two it has been revealed in the wave of mystic recrudescence that has gone over the world, which denies the dominion of the will and which maintains that when the will and imagination (the product of the unconscious, the *fons et origo boni* of whatever kind in man, according to Freud) come in conflict the latter is always victor. This is an absolute denial of the facts of civilised life.

A few years ago Mr. Anderson, realising that the body of man was a house, the dwelling-place of a spirit whose windows were so boarded up, bricked in or otherwise sealed that it was impossible for its tenant to go out, or for others to go in—felt it his mission to smash these barriers, to bore the partitions, to apply an efficient dialyser to the diaphragms of the temple

so that the spirit might get abroad to be developed and diverted. Moreover, he had a message from the spirit which he had been whispering at night into a telephone: "Build temples to yourself; worship the god sex therein; it is the only sure means of salvation." But he did not succeed in broadcasting it. To deliver it he had to do some house-wrecking, some seed-scattering in alleyways.

When he had accomplished half the span of life allotted by the psalmist to man, he heard a voice saying: "It is hard for you to kick, but you are the chosen vessel to bear the message: Life is sex; death is sex-repression; living is sex-awareness; pleasure is sex-indulgence; beauty is sex-realisation; salvation is dependent upon the development of sex-sensibilities." The scales fell from his eyes and he went to the typewriter and struck off his "Apology for Crudity"—his *credo* concerning the true inwardness and inherent mission of American literature. He also had the forethought to weave into its text a restricted and entirely dogmatic programme by which alone creative writers may hope to fulfil the mission. To ignore his creed in attempting an estimate of his work is to refuse the aid of a navigator's chart in a sea studded with islands and sown with shoals, or the aid of a blueprint in exploring a garden full of labyrinthine paths, high hedges, deep shadows, where rare flowers and rank weeds grow in apparently purposeless proximity, and blind lanes and long vistas are often veiled in fog or mist.

In 1917—a year after the appearance of his first book—Mr. Anderson went on record that "crudity is an inevitable quality in the production of really significant present-day American literature"; that nearly all the fiction being produced in America, both novels and short stories, is written by authors who live in little groups and console themselves with the thought that they are achieving intellectuality. "We shall have much crude, blundering American writing before the gift of beauty and subtlety in prose shall honestly belong to us."

The true artist in fiction must "write out of the people and not for the people" and must live "not in himself, but in many people" and be the sensitive medium through which the life about him will emerge in his art in the form of a concrete figure typifying that life. His theory is worked out upon the basis that American life—all American life, or all worth consideration in literature—is essentially crude; "that there is as yet no native subtlety of thought or living among us"; that "we are a crude and childlike people"; that no one understanding the life of our cities and towns can close his eyes to the fact that "life here is for the most part an ugly affair"; that "as a people we have given ourselves to industrialism"; that "the subjective impulse is almost unknown to us. Because it is close to life, it works out in crude and broken forms. It leads along the road that such American masters of prose as James and Howells did not want to take, but if we are to get anywhere we shall have to travel that road." Life in Spain, which is not given to industrialism, is not, I suppose, an ugly affair. And yet to the attentive observer it would seem to be.

I am convinced that Mr. Anderson is mistaken about the subjective impulse. If I were to estimate it solely from my professional experience, I should say we are as a people steeped in it. And then there is the history of Christian Science. That represents some subjectivity.

To possess and order a new world we have had to work hard, and from time immemorial it has been recognized that hard work subdues sex clamour. Hence what seems to be our apathetic sex interest is really substitution and a salubrious one at that. And there are so many other things to be subjective about: accomplishment, doing good, resisting temptation to drink.

"The true novelist is a man gone a little mad with the life of his times." It is true of Dostoievsky and of Gerhart Hauptmann, but it is not true of Anatole France, Thomas Hardy or

Arnold Bennett and it was not true of Chekhov or of Flaubert and scores of others. Still, it would seem to supply the best key to Mr. Anderson's passionate belief in crudeness. Like many others, not novelists, who are a "little mad," his reasoning is sound, but his premise is not in accord with the admitted facts of American literature. If we—all Americans—were what Mr. Anderson says we are, then inevitably a literature which truthfully reflected us would be crude, would have been crude, for crudeness is not a survival of subtlety and culture, but a forerunner of it. We should then have had not only no James and no Howells—whom Mr. Anderson admits as masters of prose—but no Hawthorne, no Poe, no Emerson, no Melville, no Thoreau, no Crane, no Edith Wharton, no Ellen Glasgow, no Willa Cather.

Mr. Anderson, in support of his theory, cites our magazine stories which, he charges, are without reality and says: "Can such work live? The answer is that the most popular magazine story or novel does not live in our minds after a month." My answer is "The Man in the Boat," "The Monster," "The Yellow Wallpaper," "Vain Oblations," still live. And there is O. Henry.

Mr. Anderson is a verbal artist, gone "a little mad with the life of his times," which leads him to ignore the fact that his restricted outlook is due to his own mental nearsightedness and not to the intellectual boundaries of his country. He mistakes a part for the whole. His range of vision has been limited to one phase of American life. It may be a most important phase, but it is not the only one. He is true to his vision and it is perhaps no more narrow a vision than that of many of his fellows. But, being a "little mad" with the life of his own cosmos, he is like a child who looks at the horizon and says, "That is the end of the world." If for "American" he had substituted "Middle West," it would have been more difficult to answer, although as evidence of the absence of a sense of humour the document would still be convincing.

Its real value is as an index to its author's own literary output.

Mr. Anderson would have us believe we live a grovelling, gruelling life, a routine whose only purpose is appeasement of our somatic needs. We don't think, imagine, indulge in phantasy or play; or, if we do, we do them as a stunt. Moreover, we have no vision of beauty. If we ever had, the stream of Puritanism in us, attenuated as it is, has washed it away. To generate this vision of beauty one must indulge sex-awareness, one must hearken to sex-appeal. His early stories were concerned with the former, his later ones with the latter.

"I do not know how far a man may go on the road of subjective writing." Since 1917, he has however been steadily learning through experiment, and likely he has heard of Marcel Proust. Perhaps he has read "Swann's Way." If so, he has some idea how far one may go on the road of subjective writing. He may also find out from the works of Dorothy Richardson, and then if he still does not know, there is James Joyce and Mrs. Virginia Woolf.

All of Mr. Anderson's novels are characterised by an intense self-awareness. The hero in every case, from "Windy McPherson's Son" to "Many Marriages," is a crude being cast in a heroic mould and lighted by a dimly sensed vision. He is struggling to find expression through the smoke, grime, ignorance, sordidness and bigness of the Middle Western industrialism. At least Mr. Anderson would have us think he is. It is difficult for the uninitiated reader to find anything heroic or inspired in John Webster, but his creator unquestionably meant to paint him as the most heroic of all his figures, the most ardent seeker after freedom, the most inspired rebel against the tyranny of repression—which, according to Freud whom he calls master, is the root of all evil—and the boldest interpreter of his inspiration.

In the three earlier novels, "Windy McPherson's Son," "Marching Men," and "Poor White," the reader has no reluctance in accepting the heroism with the rest of the thesis.

And in each of these the power lies mainly in the interpretation of the potential superman.

Starting as a street Arab, newsboy, miner's child, adopted waif of a half-hobo, in grimy Mid-western towns, he finds little trouble in gaining the whole world of industrialism, but flounders through the book in quest of his own soul. The theme is as old as history, but none the less worthy or compelling of sympathetic reactions in the readers, since in each of these books there is a genuine impulse to express a yearning which possesses the soul of every one who has a soul above the clod—a longing for divine orderliness in human affairs and revolt against the almost universal chaos in things mundane. While crude enough to conform to the requirements of the creed, often ugly and sometimes repellent as to both characters and setting, there is a nobility about the gaunt giant with a frame of iron, dynamic mind and famished soul. He lacks the philosophy, religion or culture to offset the passion of a reformer and the naïveté of a savage; yet even without Mr. Anderson's art, he would command respect and inspire sympathy.

The message of "Marching Men" (perhaps Mr. Anderson's most successful long story) is "the thing the world has not come up to yet in the sense of order. Men have not learned that we must come to understand the impulse toward order, have that burned into our consciousness, before we move on to other things. There is in us this madness for individual expression." One could scarcely make a statement of Americans that had less truth than this. If their success, material and moral (and the world generally accords them success in both fields), can be attributed to one thing more than to another it is to a quality called "team work."

Mr. Anderson thinks if we could all walk shoulder to shoulder together we might create beauty and there might arise a voice that would make the waters of the very seas tremble. He may console himself that if anything of that sort were

attempted the marching men would probably be treated as were the men who thought to build a tower whose top would reach unto heaven.

Strangely enough, McGregor, the agitator whose thoughts and deeds take up three-quarters of the book, is not the hero at all. The hero is David Ormsby, an understudy for John Webster. David has the same skunner against his wife that John had, only it was not of such long duration, and he was not prepared to go so far, but he went quite far enough for his daughter's peace of mind. Mr. Anderson's thumbs are always awkward and clumsy whenever he tries to model a woman, but he nearly succeeded with Edith, the self-sacrificing milliner, who had at a propitious moment said: "And that's that" to Margaret, social worker groping in the caverns of her sex-consciousness.

In "Many Marriages" Mr. Anderson has sailed his bark, freighted with a soul in search of release from its own futility and realisation of its vague yearnings for godship, into the troubled waters of a sea of symbolism and mysticism. Not only are they troubled but dark, turgid, reeking with what leads many readers to lay down the book in sheer revolt of the senses before they approach near enough to its meaning to divine it or call it by name. John Webster may have been a pilgrim to the shrine of truth, in sincere revolt against the veneer of sham civilisation which he believes is impeding his progress. Mr. Anderson unquestionably meant him to be. But he fails to convince many of his readers. On the contrary, he comes much nearer to convincing them that his hero is the creation of a "true novelist" who, having gone more than "a little mad with success," has aspired to a transvaluation of values, moral and esthetic. If one might take the book in a spirit of humour, which is the furthest thing in the world from the author's intention, one might even fancy a grotesque impersonation of a hazy but tenacious memory fished out of the subconsciousness of the author. It would be easy to trace

the effort at gross symbolism of that spiritual essence which felt the call of Kipling's "red gods," in a body of flesh constructed and activated according to the teachings of Freud. Such a reversal of the symbolic order, the interpretation in crass materialism of the subtleties of the spirit, would be daring and consistent with Mr. Anderson's genius. Whether he has done it unintentionally or knowingly, he has done it well.

"Many Marriages" is an elaboration of the closing incident in "Marching Men," and of a story called "Out of Nowhere into Nothing."

When John Webster, a prosperous washing-machine manufacturer, living in a town of 25,000 people, in the State of Wisconsin, with a wife named Mary and a daughter named Jane, was about forty, he began to involute emotionally and mentally. That is, he began to experience sensations associated with "change of life," an epoch which was once believed to occur only in women, but which occurs in men as well, though usually not in such bizarre fashion. It hit Webster hard and some thought him insane. "Perhaps I am becoming for some reason a little insane," he thought. Many a woman going through the same experience has a similar thought. "It was a little hard to describe the feeling he had. Down within his body something began to affect him like an illness. It was as though something was being born. Had he been a woman he might have suspected he had suddenly become pregnant." This description would fit many involuting individuals. It is not unlikely that the tree has a similar sensation when the sap goes up, and when it goes out to the twigs.

Although Mr. Anderson finds it difficult to describe the feeling John Webster had, the latter found no difficulty in sensing its significance or seeking its appeasement. He walked through his own office as he had done a thousand times since he had become a manufacturer and suddenly the scales dropped from his eyes and he saw a broad-faced woman of twenty-four. She was the daughter of a German saloon keeper and an Irish-

woman, who after the death of her husband took to strong drink, venting her spleen on her daughters, who "were good girls and worked hard" and had strong bodies but were not very handsome.

He knew that Natalie Swartz was his affinity just as George Ponderevo of Tono Bungay knew Effie Rink was his affinity when he walked through the room in which the corresponding typists worked. Natalie knew it with greater certainty even than he did. She was shameless about it. Despite the throes of concupiscence, she heeded some convention: "At the noon time she had hurried out of the office and had run all the way home to her mother's house. There was no bathtub there, but she had drawn water from a well and put it in a common wash-tub in a shed back of the house. Then she had plunged into the water and washed her body from head to foot." She then put on all the finery she possessed and went back to the factory. A forward minx was Natalie. It is quite probable that she merited the name that her mother called her. Be that as it may, she made adultery easy for John, and it did not concern or disturb her that her co-workers knew of it. "Loving Natalie did not preclude the possibility of his loving another, perhaps many others. A rich man might have many marriages." And Webster felt that he wallowed in riches—riches of lust.

John's conscience kept whispering: "Square yourself with me." So he recalled Adam's excuse and said: "It was my wife's fault. She held to consortion 'for creation only' and that did not suffice me." Then he felt that he had been transubstantiated from good to beautiful, and he could no longer live with Mary and Jane. Before leaving them, however, he must open their eyes: make the former realise her past, the latter her future. Instead of going about it in a straightforward way and saying to Mary (in a quiet conversational tone): "It is not my intention to continue living in this house. My trunk is packed and in an hour it will be

called for. I have only come to say that I will not live near you any longer"; because he lacked the courage, or knew full well that Mary would not remain silent long enough for him to speak these words, or give him time to get a lawyer to make an appropriate settlement, Mr. Anderson makes his hero adopt a unique plan, one that both he and his admirers undoubtedly believe is deeply significant and symbolic.

Meanwhile, puffed with passion, John Webster is euphoric and ecstatic. "Love-making for him had become a symbol of something more filled with meaning than consortion and semination" and he thought "a time will come when love like a sheet of fire will run through towns and cities. It will tear walls away. It will destroy ugly houses. It will tear ugly clothes off the bodies of men and women." It has already got under way in Russia, but so far architecture has not been influenced, and the most radical still wear clothes. Comfort perhaps compels that convention in Russia. In his mystic exaltation John fancied that all women save his wife lusted after him, and he identified pictures of women in shop-windows with Natalie. He bought a small framed picture of the Virgin (it looked not unlike Natalie), a supply of yellow candles and two glass candlesticks made in the shape of crosses with little figures of the Christ on the cross upon them. That night he set the picture up on his dresser and put lighted candles on each side of it, then he undressed and began to walk back and forth "thinking such thoughts as came into his head," hoping thus to purify the room a bit, and, if this succeeded, later to carry on in the streets in the same way with the same object. Of course he would have to be more careful in the streets, "as I did not want to be declared insane and locked up somewhere, but Natalie will help me in that. Good old Natalie! She had been locked up too and he had forced the lock. In a way my letting go of myself will be an expression for both of us." He was convinced that "everywhere lives are lived without purpose" and he determined to put

some purpose into his life and the way to do it was to convince his daughter that he was justified in abandoning her mother and going off with Natalie and at the same time to startle her into a realisation of the facts of life; "having helped to give her physical life I have now to try at least to give her inner life also." And this is how he did it: every night he kept walking up and down before the picture of the Virgin, occasionally apostrophising her and more often admiring his nudity, thinking and saying: "the gods have been good to me. I am not very young any more, but for some reason I have not let my body get fat or gross." He avoided the family. Naturally they were curious to know how he spent the time in his room and they took pains to find out. One night, while engaged in this infantile pastime, the door leading to his wife's room opened and a few minutes later the door of his daughter's room opened. This was what he had been awaiting. "Come in," he said, "both of you, come in. Go sit there on the bed together, I have something to say to you." "There was a commanding ring in his voice." Jane, a modest girl of seventeen, recently graduated from high school, not so experienced as Janet March, was embarrassed to see her father in a state that pretended to deny original sin. She was permitted to retain her nightgown, but he soon succeeded in putting her more or less at ease and proceeded to tell her the story of his life, that is, of love's awakening, development, accomplishments and impotencies.

The purpose of it all is to show that Mrs. Webster is not only shallow and hollow but an empty shell. For twenty-five years she had short-circuited the current that was now flowing harmoniously through him, which, if he could only communicate it to the world, might facilitate a renaissance of sensibility and awareness. He was determined that his wife, though inanimate and soulless, should realise that her house had been the way to hell going down to the chambers of death, and he was equally determined that his young daughter should not

sleep in the harvest, at hand. During the recital, the daughter, hiding her face in the pillow, groans in mental anguish.

Meanwhile the admiration for his own body had been transferred to that of his daughter and "his voice grew soft and reminiscent as he took his hand from his daughter's leg and touched her cheeks and then her hair. He was frankly making love to her now and she had somewhat fallen under his influence." And he continued his lubricitous narrative. Every now and then it would occur to him that "there was something diabolically strange about the way youth had come into his figure and he had quite won his way with his daughter. There he was, you see, wanting nothing specially from her and he was whole-heartedly giving himself to her. He reached forward and taking his daughter's bare foot in his hand, drew it to him and kissed it. Something like a blush came swiftly over his daughter's face and then she began to look at him with very serious puzzled eyes." Finally he succeeded "in breaking through the wall that had separated him from his daughter and they went and sat together on the bed with his arm about her and her head on his shoulder. In a way his daughter had given herself to him as he had given himself to her. There had been a kind of marriage, as he realised. I have been a father as well as a lover. Perhaps the two things cannot be differentiated." No, they cannot be differentiated by animals of the field, by beasts of the jungle, but they can be differentiated by man and it is this capacity for differentiation that has delivered him from the sign of the beast. The plane upon which this book moves is the sub-human plane of animal appetite. "I have been one father who has not been afraid to realise the loveliness of his daughter's flesh, and to fill my senses with the fragrance of it," was what he said. Such fathers unfortunately have existed from time immemorial and even as remotely as when the Lord spake unto Moses, saying: "Whosoever shall commit this abomination his soul shall be cut off from among their people."

Before John Webster has completely won over his daughter, his wife feels herself engulfed in a Cimmerian darkness and she reaches for the prussic acid. Webster has a sense of release and his daughter cannot find it in her heart to be sad. Naturally I do not know what experience Mr. Anderson has had with individuals who commit suicide but, granted that there are women like Mrs. Webster in the world, even in the State of Wisconsin, I state quite confidently that none of them has accomplished self-destruction. It is not being done in that set. Colourful characters, not colourless, commit suicide. But that is a mere detail and when one has undertaken such a job as Mr. Sherwood Anderson has, namely, to tell the world that God, having created man and woman in his image, blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it, he cannot be distracted by such trifles as the relation of character to suicide.

John and Natalie steal out of town together to take a 4 a.m. train. Natalie's heels resound on the sidewalk and John, who has now reached his full spiritual growth, says to her, "Come, woman, walk on the grass, don't make such a row as we get along." In fact John is more of a caveman as he makes his entry into this new world where love reigns supreme than he was when he was a "fairly prosperous manufacturer of washing-machines." Natalie begins to weep when he speaks to her in this way, but her tears dry. She is more fortunate than the reader of this book, for his tears can never dry so long as he has memory.

Mr. Anderson once introduced us to his dumb man who, taking leave of us, said: "I have a wonderful story to tell, but know no way to tell it." It is difficult for me to convince myself that he knew a wonderful story when he began "Many Marriages."

Happily Mr. Anderson's compulsion neurosis lets up every now and then and he writes short stories that reveal his talent both as a judge of material and as an artisan. The short story

is his successful medium, and aside from "Marching Men," none of his "long talks" is worth particular pursuit.

In "Horses and Men," long and short tales from our American life, and in the volume entitled "The Triumph of the Egg," he is to be seen for what he is: a master of words. Rémy de Gourmont said beautiful prose should have rhythm which makes one doubt if it be prose. Mr. Anderson writes beautiful prose. What he recently wrote about Miss Gertrude Stein is far truer of himself: "She is laying word against word, relating sound to sound, feeling for the taste and the smell, the rhythm of the individual word." He also said: "What she is doing is of more importance to writers of English than the work of many of our more easily understood and more widely accepted word artists," and in these lines we see the *vis a tergo* of Mr. Sherwood Anderson's writings.

In none of his books has he shown such consummate mastery of the inevitable word as in these last tales. Likewise the materials of the incidents or tales are seasoned, sound, and perspicaciously selected. Like the hero of the tale entitled "The Triumph of a Modern," Mr. Anderson has done it with words. He has uncovered treasure that will suffice him a long time. We enjoy seeing him spend it. We cannot be too thankful that he has sobered of the spree of "Many Marriages," for when he is sober and reflective it is a pleasure to witness him carry on.

Mr. Anderson's knowledge is based on intuition and experience as his art is founded on inherent talent and assiduous study of the English impressionists. It may be possible for one who does not know from experience the fetters of sensitiveness and timidity, and the liberation of them that comes from taking a small amount of alcohol, to write "I'm a Fool," but I doubt it. It has the note of verity that one finds in "The Confessions of a Young Man" which Mr. George Moore would not for a moment allow were not reflections of real experience.

In the tale entitled "Unused," Mr. Anderson shows his deepest familiarity with psychology and his skill in describing its operations. The story is of a young girl in an Ohio town, half village, half city. She is the youngest and most normal of six children, all of whom "were cattle except her, just cattle." Appearances are deceitful even in Bidwell, and May Edgley had not only a shut-in personality but one that tended to cleave in twain as well. This cleavage, resulting apparently from an overwhelming surge of the creative impulse when the censor of nature's message nodded, is the warp and woof of the story. The immediate reaction to the assault (for such it was in reality), the attempt to stem the tide of contumely that at once swept over her, the fabrication of waking and sleeping states, the gradual inability to differentiate repressed real from rampant reality, the potency of fear and its constant conflict with determination, May's struggle to be simultaneously human and superhuman, are described in the simple way that constitutes art.

It is in the externalisation of moods rather than ideas, through the medium of printed words, that Mr. Anderson excels. The best of his stories flashes each a single mood as vividly as a mirror flashes the figure before it; or more accurately, it gives forth, as a musical instrument played by a master artist, the mood of the artist interpreting the composition. The weakness of his art is that he does not identify himself with his quest. His phrase does not form an entire fusion with the artist. In the opinion of many, Willem Mengelberg has no peer as a conductor. His merit is not that he drills his orchestra until they can render a phrase perfectly, but that when they render it he fuses himself wholly and completely with it, every fibre and every surge. This Mr. Anderson does not do. He does not blend himself with his art so that it can be said:

Si che vostr' arte a Dio quasi e nepote.

Nevertheless his phonetic sense displayed in the use of words, the rhythm of sentences and the cadences throughout an entire sketch suggests more than a mere word-wizard; rather a musician who has strayed into literature. The more he depends for effect upon moods built by the witchery of words, the more powerful the result.

Even in the best of his stories, however, his revelation of life is fragmentary, incomplete, unbalanced. He can portray a single mood in all the perfection that subtlety of tone alone can give. But his art suffers, even here, from the obsession of ugliness, of gloom, of sensuality. Life as Mr. Anderson paints it is all shadows; as he sings of it, all pitched in a minor key. And this we know is not true. If it were true, if the human journeys were always and inevitably through a valley of shadows, if there were not even illusory and fleeting rays of sunshine to lighten it, or pale moonlight to throw a merciful glamour over the night, human endurance could not sustain the weariness and strain. Life is made up of shadows and of lights, of bright colours and of subdued tones, of ugliness and of beauty, as every sane, sentient being knows. And the literature which would make of it all minor keys, drab tones, ugliness, sensuality and sin is as untrue to realism and to art as is that of the opposite school which for the last decade has been nauseating us with an avalanche of "joy stuff."

Sherwood Anderson is an artist working with a repulsive medium. Repulsive to whom? To the public at large. Was it Mr. Vanderbilt who said something about the public which revealed his complete indifference to it? Possibly Mr. Anderson shares his sentiment. It would be interesting to know whether he does, but it will be of far greater interest to note, from the developments of the near future, whether or not he will be able to use that public for his own purposes with such masterly success as did his disdainful predecessor.

III

THE BIG FOUR OF AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS

WE have few possessions that do us more honour than our women writers. It would be easy to name a score of women novelists, poets, and essayists, who are a credit to their country and its culture. No one is likely to maintain that Edith Wharton, Agnes Repplier, Ellen Glasgow, Amy Lowell, Dorothy Canfield, Willa Cather, Anne Sedgwick, Zona Gale, and Edna Ferber have been outdistanced by their male competitors; and if Edwin Arlington Robinson has a superior in the field of poetry, it is Edna St. Vincent Millay.

§ 1. Mrs. Edith Wharton

Mrs. Wharton and Miss Repplier are our most precious literary ornaments. The former has a mastery of the novel-form, technique, and material that the latter has of the essay; and they are both women of comprehensive culture, which supplements their intuitions and discernments. "Ethan Frome" and "The Fireside Sphinx" are as durable as "The Scarlet Letter" and "La Vie des Abeilles."

Mrs. Wharton did not begin to write until comparatively late in life. Stephen Crane had already captured a degree of immortality with "The Open Boat" when he had scarcely more than half the years Mrs. Wharton had when "The Greater Inclination" was published. But hers was not a misspent youth. She had done that which even geniuses must do: she had observed, pondered, studied. Her first book was "The Decoration of Houses." Thus did she prepare the canvas and develop the background upon which were to be displayed drawing and pigment that would excite the admiration of the Eng-

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lish-reading world in "The House of Mirth," "Ethan Frome," "Madame de Treymes," and "The Glimpses of the Moon."

There are few literary careers that have been so harmonious in their development as Mrs. Wharton's. Her first fiction was a collection of short stories, "The Greater Inclination." They were like semi-precious stones with clean-cut facets and highly polished surfaces. In the beginning she was wont to restrict the field of her characters' activities to artistic and academic circles, but once she got "The Valley of Decision" out of her mind she avoided those circles.

Her full stride came with a description of a cross-section of New York society when the tidal wave of wealth first swept over it. She called it "The House of Mirth." Lily Bart of pathetic and pathologic parentage is a social parasite. She is the little sister of the vulgar rich, sensitive, selfish, and hedonistic. She wants to eat her cake and keep it. She possesses an attribute which permits some women to do that successfully—namely, pulchritude—but she is lacking in "it"—that something called "temperament." So philandering with the Trenors and the Dorsets, she lets Percy Gryce, puritanical, promising provider of luxury, escape from her net and be captured by Gwen Van Osburgh, thus cementing affinity, for "the two had the same prejudices and ideals and the same quality of making other standards non-existent by ignoring them."

Her vanity and uncontrollable tendency to go the easiest way compromised her at the *rond-point* of the marriage highway with a vulgar brute, Gus Trenor, and made her the easy prey of a social Shylock, Monty Rosedale. Selden, whom she might easily have landed if she had gone out to him in flood tide, got away. Poor Lily Bart! Had she only been a host, not a parasite! In that event, the sequence of Mr. Rosedale's remark to her, "I'm more in love with you than ever, but if I married you now I'd queer myself for good and all," would have been as interesting as the Dempsey-Firpo reel, and Mr. Rosedale would have known just how Mr. Firpo felt when the

last bell sounded. The Bart-Rosedale contact short-circuits the story.

The life of Lily Bart teaches us that pulchritude without passion is like faith without works. It is dead, being alone. However, this book is an index of Mrs. Wharton's capacity as a novelist. She can create the *genus-homo,* male and female, but she cannot always galvanise them into life. Her most successful creations have more head than heart, more sand than sentiment. Hence she is more successful with her female characters. Selden, Amherst, Lansing, Archer, all lack one quality, a composite of many elements of personality. The English have a short, ugly word for it, but in America and France it is called "red blood." Ethan Frome is her only one-hundred-per-cent male child, and his orientation was scarcely up to date, but it harmonised with his environment.

"The House of Mirth" carried Mrs. Wharton's name to Europe, and in her next book, "The Custom of the Country," she took her heroine, Undine, over and introduced her to the Faubourg St. Germain, whose traditions and customs she knows so well, and to the European cities where rich Americans *font la roue* and boast of their possessions.

It is noteworthy that Mrs. Wharton's greatest success followed her greatest failure. "The Fruit of the Tree" was published in 1907. It revealed the writer's growing ambition. Not only would she test the foundation of fiction—character-creating—but she would ornament and elaborate the superstructure with ethical and sociological problems and discussion. She did not carry it through well. It is doubtful whether Justine Brent has a parallel in real life, and John Amherst is an egocentric, self-satisfied uplifter, whose single-track mind is mosaic in structure and paranoiac in display. Mrs. Wharton tests our credulity in submitting his flamboyant success with Mrs. Westmore and Miss Brent. Few will believe that he would have been tolerated in the Hanaford organisation after his measure had been taken and his pattern filed. As for the

undescribable little bounder, Cicely, nothing like her ever existed. She was created by necessity to deliver Justine and John from the predicament their self-sufficiency and vicarious assumption of the functions of God had brought upon them.

It is universally admitted that novels are the best culture-mediums for the development of human character. We form our estimates of people quite as much from those we meet in books as from those we meet in the flesh. Creators of character in fiction have a responsibility—to enlarge and perfect our ideal of the human species, to incite us to better conduct, deepen our sympathies, help us understand the problems of life and how to solve them. We read fiction for diversion; but what is diversion but balm for *la douleur de vivre?*

Not many would like to meet or be intimate with Justine or John, with Bessie Westmore or Dr. Wyant. Viewing them in the most favourable light, one can only see a sentimentalist, an egoist, an adult infant, and a potential psychopath. The way they carry on is tiresome. Why should an author "elect" a wretched sentimentalist, forever dipping into other people's business, to give a lethal dose of morphine to a lady with a crushed spinal cord, wife of the man she wanted to marry? Justine perhaps would not admit at the moment that she wanted to marry John Amherst, but she had realised immediately when she met him three years before "that they were blent in that closest of unions, the discovery of a common fund of humour," and she had refused Dr. Wyant, a man of promise. Fiction is a suitable place to discuss the legitimacy of the procedure, but Justines or Johns should never have a vote when such a decision is being made.

"A Son at the Front" was a labour of love and of justice, obviously done for posterity. It bears the imprint of Mrs. Wharton's solicitude, love and talents. Each word conveys the idea Mrs. Wharton wishes to convey. The book has humour and philosophy, though the author's sentimentality must have been continually repressed. Mrs. Wharton's love for France,

her admiration for its people, and her intimate knowledge and understanding of its actions and reactions, are spread through the novel like honey through a comb. She has not chosen the most creditable types of her own country, but her French characters are picked with care. "A Son at the Front" is likely to prove to be an acknowledged document of the war-period and future generations who try to understand the psychology of the war, who study the contemporary literature of that period, may turn to it as we turn to the Memoirs of Saint-Simon in our endeavours to understand the *Grand Siècle* of France.

"Madame de Treymes," another vivid example of Mrs. Wharton's understanding of France, deals with the upper class where traditions are ethics and respect for the family a standard. It cannot be said that the author is indulgent to her spiritual country: to be indulgent one must recognise faults and shortcomings: "L'Amour ne voit pas, et l'Amitié ne veut pas voir."

Mrs. Wharton began her career with the short story, and her debtors hope that she has not permanently forsaken it. Her mastery of the story-telling art is most apparent in the volume entitled "The Descent of Man." Books made up of short stories are not popular with the present generation, but they may be with the next. Should they be, "The Mission of Jane," "A Journey," and "The Descent of Man" will be keenly sought. Not only are they sound psychology, but they are also exceptional character studies. Were we permitted to spend our remaining days with any of Mrs. Wharton's women, we should probably select Mrs. Lethbury, whose "body had been privileged not to outstrip her mind," and who, when she chose the rosebud paper for the front room upstairs, always thought, when the certainty of sterility weighed upon her, that "it would be such a pretty paper for a baby to wake up in." Moreover, Mrs. Wharton's early male creations are more sympathetic than those of her full maturity.

The story that gives the title to the volume, "The Descent of Man," is the adventure of a happily married entomologist. He comes upon certain semi-scientific books which have great vogue with the public whose appetite for scientific knowledge is insatiate. The vogue passes, but the hilarity remains. And from it is born the idea which takes possession of him: he will avenge his goddess by satirising her false interpreters. He will write a parody on a popular scientific book, heaping platitude on platitude, fallacy on fallacy, false analogy on false analogy, and so use his superior knowledge that the gross crowd will join in the laugh against his augurs. The gluttonous reader would not detect the irony, but it would be there, and it would not interfere with the sale of the book. The real irony is that the writer succumbed to the spell of popularity and its emoluments.

"The Age of Innocence" is a document of the last century. It has all the flavour of the chivalry of those years, and the easy and leisurely stride of the horse-cab days. The novel is of America—its people, customs, ideals, standards, and dignity—particularly of New York society in the Seventies. It is redolent of humour, indulgence, tolerance, and understanding. In her studies of the three principal characters, Mrs. Wharton has added charm, luxury, and beauty to their surroundings. Ellen Olenska, the American-born Polish countess, is the only breath of newer days that comes into the novel, while Newland Archer and his wife, May, represent the shut-in, firmly rooted, but sterile aristocracy. Newland ruins his career to be true to his wife, while his heart and love are for Ellen, but he fulfils his marriage-vows and keeps his instincts within the bounds of propriety. On saying farewell to the woman he loves, he can turn to his wife with a clear conscience and the satisfaction of the man who has not only done his duty, but established a precedent. If it does not often happen in real life, we are grateful that it does in fiction.

"The Glimpses of the Moon" disappointed many of Mrs.

Wharton's followers, and some of them found it thin, cheap, and sentimental, epithets that are certainly not applicable to most of her books.

Years ago, Mrs. Wharton—like Professor Lynyard of her own creation—eloped with an idea: to satirise the false interpreters of human behaviour. The idea germinated, fructified, matured. We have profited by it. She is the best exponent of the manners and customs of her time that this country has produced.

One of Mrs. Wharton's greatest distinctions is that she is not sentimental; when she succeeds in awakening an emotion in the reader, it is a legitimate one; and she accomplishes it by her art, not through parade of her own feeling. She keeps her personality out of her novels. This trait she has in common with Henry James, whom many say she called Master. Her intelligence vibrates in her novels, but not her heart; and because of this she has an equally undeserved reputation for cold-bloodedness. Like a high-born woman she does not wear her heart upon her sleeve, nor has she put windows in her thorax. She does not seek personality defects to magnify and emphasise them, and happily her characters have a passion for soap and water.

She can be both ironical and satirical. Fundamentally she is a realist, and describes people and things as they are, have been, and should be. She is essentially intellectual, and for this reason it has often been said that she writes like a man. The truth is that her writing is sexless. The masculine quality I see in her writing is the tone of irony, which is probably her means of escape from the tyranny of intuition. Irony for her is a means, not an end. She sympathises with her characters only as objects; and when she exerts any critical sense, it is mostly instinctive.

She is detached from her plot. She can stand over and away from her structure and let the story tell itself, absorbing all our attention with a few light touches, and giving finality

to all of them. The tenseness of her style and the manner in which she combines eagerness with discipline, poise and perfection of phrase with lack of mannerism, are the tangible bases of her talent. She plots her stories, sees in her mind's eye the persons who participate in them, how they look, dress, and act, what their background is. She seeks to tell the truth about them, impartially and unemotionally; and in doing so succeeds in escaping all prejudices by renouncing all opinions, all points of view.

§ 2. Miss Agnes Repplier

In her chosen field, Miss Agnes Repplier has no serious competitor of her sex. She is the shining example that appreciation and praise do not spoil a strong character. There are few literary lights whose globes have been less bespattered with prejudices, passion, envy, and jealousy. She has sailed the seas of interpretative literature for forty years and more, without encountering a storm. The log of her journeys has been published in a dozen or so small, entertaining, and instructive volumes. It would be hazardous to say that our descendants will read them, but they will deprive themselves of pleasure and profit if they do not. Though Miss Repplier has written biography, history, current comment, and "The Fireside Sphinx," which shows she knows the cat as a miser knows his pocket, her qualifications for the Hall of Fame will be determined by consideration of her essays. And the committee of admission will probably give more counts to her late books than to her early ones, though "Convent Days" will always appeal to many as it does to me. Her literary career has not been subject to episodic interludes of progression and retrogression. It has been one of steady advancement.

I propose some day to investigate the causes of writers' involution. Why does a person who has shown not only great promise, but creditable performance, display, usually in the

fifth decade of life, a falling-off in quantity and quality, so that his or her work becomes quite negligible? I shall take Mary E. Wilkins Freeman and Arthur Symons as examples. Why others evolute in the same epoch would likewise be an interesting inquiry. That Mrs. Wharton and Miss Repplier got more power in their literary elbows from the War, cannot be denied. In "Counter-Currents," the latter made a complete *volte-face,* and the perspective that confronted her embraced many things other than books, cats, and retrospection. Here she showed that she had, in addition to a cultured, logical, judicial mind—an ideal, almost essential possession for the essayist, namely, versatility. The transformation was not abrupt, for in "Americans and Others" she had revealed that the apparatus needed to facilitate the leap was being installed in her mental laboratory.

Miss Repplier's essays have always been distinguished for certain qualities: sane substance, orderly presentation, decorous garb. She presents her thesis and unfolds it tactfully and convincingly, thanks to her common sense and her culture, her humour and her choice of irony in preference to sarcasm. The reader feels that, though the writer knows the subject under discussion and has reflected on it, she does not preëmpt it. He feels that she has listened attentively to the ideas and formulations of others, and that her purpose is to illumine, not to settle—to suggest, not to command. What she said of Walter Scott is applicable to herself: "That which he accomplished was the result of an evenly balanced mind, conscious of its own strength: yet too sane to believe itself infallible."

These qualities stand forth in the essay called "The Repeal of Reticence" as conspicuously as in any other. I doubt if any contribution to the so-called sex-question surpasses it in penetration, restraint, wisdom, and good taste. Those who maintain that the mind of a child is a cesspool without vent, and that no one will clean it, will find Miss Repplier's search of her own youthful mind an illuminating confession.

AGNES REPPLIER
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I never reread Miss Repplier's essays without wishing for influence with presidents of colleges and headmasters of schools. Had I such influence, her work would be frequently read and diligently construed by their pupils. Not only would it orient them in taste, it would also give them perspective, penetration, and point of view. It might also teach them that tolerance is a cardinal virtue which their country does not possess, and never has possessed adequately, despite protestations to the contrary.

No matter what the subject of discussion, Miss Repplier is always tolerant of the views, convictions, and statements of others. She is no bloodthirsty combatant, seeking an opportunity to press a final thrust of the rapier upon her adversary; no more is she a judge laying down the law. She is an interpreter, a mediator, an exponent of the best in man, actual and ideal, cognisant of his moral frailties and social infirmities, but convinced that they are neither dominant nor recrudescent.

Miss Repplier's first books, published forty years ago, were concerned wholly with literary and allied subjects. It is remarkable how apposite some of her reflections and criticisms are to the present day. She writes of the young girl of that period: "She has probably never read a single masterpiece of our language; she has never been moved by a noble poem, or stirred to the quick by a well-told page of history; she has never opened the pores of her mind for the reception of a vigorous thought, or the solution of a mental problem." And these are the grandmothers of to-day! Many will part with the belief regretfully that they were paragons of the domestic virtues, to whom jazz and the movies, had they existed, would not have appealed. In parting with it they may console themselves with the reflection that it was these sentimental, undisciplined girls who mothered the generation that forced upon mankind recognition of their claims to full independence, and who now stand beneath legislation that may, for good or evil, shape the fate of man. And that no one shall find this sentence

cryptic, I mean legislation that restricts man's rights heretofore considered inalienable, that puts a new meaning on the words "free determination" and constitutes governmental paternalism.

Discussing in "Curiosities of Criticism" the system of mutual admiration by which a little coterie of writers help one another into prominence, she wrote: "This delicate game, which is now conducted with such well-rewarded skill by a few enterprising players, consists not so much in open flattery, though there is plenty of that too, as in the minute chronicling of every insignificant circumstance of each other's daily lives, from the hour at which they breakfast to the amount of exercise they find conducive to appetite. We are stifled by the literary gossip which fills the newspapers and periodicals. Nothing is too trivial, nothing too irrelevant to be told." It is a comfort to know that our ancestors outlived an infliction which we, who are in its throes, often fear may prove fatal.

Reading has done for Miss Repplier what Bacon claimed it was capable of doing. It has made her full, ready, and exact. She seems to have read widely and discriminatively, and to have remembered or annotated prodigiously. The classics and ephemeral literature both furnish her with adorning and enlightening material, whether she is speaking of Leopardi, of Eugénie de Guérin, of Matthew Arnold, Walter Bagehot, W. D. Howells, or Edgar Saltus. She convinces you of her capacity for fruitful interpretation by showing the mind of the writer under consideration. I fancy there has never been much interest in this country in the greatest Italian poet of the nineteenth century, yet when Miss Repplier refers to him one might easily believe that Mr. Bickersteth's splendid study of Leopardi was at her elbow.

Many of Miss Repplier's admirers hold "The Fireside Sphinx" to be her best book. It all depends on how one feels about cats. That it is more interesting, diverting, and instructive than many biographies cannot be denied. It reveals the

writer as a woman of sympathy, humour, and spirit. It reveals the cat as one of the nicest things in the world after woman. The epilogue is as redolent of grace and sentiment as anything I know in modern literature. It is an invaluable book to those who put the cat in fiction.

Like the Greek dramatists who wrote their best plays in old age, Miss Repplier's best work is that of her late maturity: "Are Americans a Timid People?" published last year shows that her mind has lost none of its prehensile and interpretative capacity, and her pen none of its facility to write forceful, graceful English, pregnant of thought, laden with common sense, and spiced with humour. In "Counter-Currents" she had shown that an exceptional intelligence had been enlarged and intensified by an unusual culture; and that an enviable sensibility had been quickened and deepened by observations of a materialistic and predatory age, and reflections upon its ramifications and precipitations. The essay entitled "The Modest Immigrant" in that volume is one of the finest examples of restraint tempered with humour that I know. "Points of Friction" revealed the sane, sympathetic, tolerant individual who had lived with the living and with the records of the dead, and had learned therefrom to thrust the key of life dexterously into the lock of destiny's door. Some of the subjects, such as "Living in History," "Woman Enthroned," and "The Stray Prohibitionist," indicate that now and then she has held the door open long enough to make a brief survey of some of the things the future has in store for us. She is a thinker as well as a critic; her thought has the imprint of originality, and her manner of expressing it the tradition of artistry. Her personality appears transparently in her writings, and the reader perceives that her success as an essayist is a success of character.

It is to be regretted that essays are never best-sellers. If we as a nation could take something that would stimulate an appetite for them, as one takes an *apéritif* to increase the pleas-

ure and profit of eating, it would make for our advantage. We might amend the Constitution to the effect that no one shall be permitted to read more than two novels in succession unless he has read a volume of essays. If that seems too drastic, Mr. Volstead's pattern might make the irreducible minimum one essay. It would be too great an encroachment on personal liberty for the law to insist that one shall read Miss Repplier; but if legislation does not kill good taste after it has destroyed initiative, the discerning reader will turn to her anyway.

§ 3. Miss Amy Lowell

Ten years ago the person who selected Miss Amy Lowell as the most promising free spirit and pathfinder in American poetry would have had his judgment severely called in question. At that time, Miss Lowell was tagged with a label bearing upon one side the legend, "A Dome of Many-Coloured Glasses," and on the other:

> "When you, my dear, are away, away,
> How wearily goes the creeping day."

Indifferent to such judgments probably, Miss Lowell was "eagerly scanning the future which was soon to possess her." The horizon was obscure, but the faint, fleecy clouds of the high heavens made sky-writing which said: "Be manly, mandatory, militant, masterful; destroy the drowsy syrups that are lulling the poets of the world to sleep." Like Constantine she became a crusader. He pledged himself to deliver the Holy Sepulchre, she to liberate Pegasus from the stable where he was being killed by soft hands and stale feed.

Her accomplishments of the past decade ("Sword Blades and Poppy Seed" which first disclosed her power, was published in 1914) have given her a definite position. They re-

veal a wondrous industry, malleability, versatility; a capacity for assimilating and producing. Leopardi said that all poets might be grouped under two heads: those who wrote with their heart (sentiment) and those who wrote with their head (imagination). Miss Lowell is of the latter group. Her poems with few exceptions are the result of memory and imagination submitted to laborious artisanship. She is to be judged by her quantity as well as by her quality. Besides publishing a half-dozen volumes of poems and two discerning volumes of criticism—one on French, the other on American poets—she has also been generous to the magazines that feature poetry. Poet and critic, Miss Lowell is a warrior also. She enjoys combat and rides abroad anticipating knightly encounter in which helmets may be split and opponents unhorsed. One of the earliest couplets she learned was:

> "Twice blessed is he who hath his quarrel just,
> But three times he who gets his blow in fust."

And she repeats it frequently *sotto voce* while palpating delicately a string of jade beads.

She has camouflaged an inherent feminine sensibility, so that it appears aggressive, and masculine. *Au fond,* she is soft and gentle like Francis Jammes, who excites her profound admiration. Somewhat unfairly to her frank generosity and sensitive appreciation, she will go to remarkable lengths at times to convince us that she is insensitive to the feelings of others, contemptuous of their convictions, disdainful of their beliefs. She has the aggressiveness of Samuel Johnson, the daring of George Borrow and the tenacity of John Bunyan. Her zeal for the cause of the Imagists equals that of Borrow in his determination to put the Bible in Spain. She shares with Bernard Shaw a weakness for prefaces, and like him she reveals herself in them more than in her text. In one of her earliest books she said that the poet must learn his trade in

the same manner and with the same painstaking care as the cabinetmaker. She has learned hers, and she has done it by unremitting industry and labour, qualities which are reflected in practically all her poems, but in none so conspicuously as in "Legends" and "Men, Women and Ghosts." And these works prove her not only an artisan who has mastered her craft, but also an astoundingly versatile one, who can do a Medusa head or a gold cover for a prayer-book, as the spirit moves her. She is an artisan as finished in her line as Benvenuto Cellini was in his. Acceptance of this however does not carry with it the admission that she—or those for whom she contends, be they Imagists, *Vers Libristes,* Symbolists, or New Born Ones too recent to have names—is the only one who knows her trade or who can tell us why poetry should exist, or what its mission is.

Miss Lowell has had great success as a lecturer and impromptu speaker and in such utterances would seem at times to be ruled by her emotions. In her writings she is always ruled by her intellect. It is this emotionalism that makes her unsatisfactory as literary judge or jury, but it does make her an entertaining, illuminating witness. She is given to idealising—to-day Keats, yesterday Henri de Régnier, to-morrow T. S. Eliot, perhaps; this idealisation is another evidence of the strongly feminine strain that underlies her work. For though Miss Lowell seems continually to turn away from this softer strain and to overlay it with hard, brilliant enamels of one hue or another, it is always fundamentally there. And yet, from the days of her earliest success, so strong has been the growth in her of certain familiar masculine characteristics—vast industry, remarkable versatility and tireless endurance—that she has inscribed a name upon the annals of American poetry that will be difficult to erase. Had she the gifts of high imagination and originality to add to her other endowments and acquisitions, then she would be a great poet.

One who would travel *de luxe* through the kingdom of

AMY LOWELL
Photograph by *Bachrach, New York*

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modern poetry should read her "Six French Poets" and "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry." She lifts for the traveller the veil of uncertainty and confusion that sometimes shrouds the efforts of those writers whose ambition is to bolster up a new movement or adopt a new style of expression. The dangerous path that leads from Naturalism to Symbolism, from Symbolism to Imagism, Impressionism, and Cubism, is made a valley of enchantment and apparently a safe highway. She displays keen understanding of the movements of poetry, and is never obscure in her discussions. She is a strange mixture of acceptance and revolution, of tradition and novelty, of wilfulness and restraint. In the first-named book she sometimes allows her admiration to surpass her discernment; she overadorns some portraits such as Henri de Régnier, and although she has grasped his poetical type, she classes him too high in her measuring-scale. She is a devotee of æsthetics and sacrifices much to it.

She has followed the Symbolistic movement of French poetry assiduously, and has drawn conclusions and profit from it to the advantage of her own poetry. She has watched the waning of Materialism and the birth of Symbolism with increasing interest and her observations have made her a safe guide to lead poetry-lovers through the mazes of its conception.

Her talent of clarification and broad visualisation is best shown in "Six French Poets." It is also the best introduction to the study of her own poetry. The French Imagists paved the way, or possibly inspired "Pictures of the Floating World."

Her study of Emile Verhaeren is flawless. With human understanding she has shown him to be a man and she explains him as a poet with the facility of an expert. She has appreciated, without exaggeration, the place that he has held and will hold in poetry, at the same time showing the void he has filled and the difference in the appeal his talent makes to Anglo-Saxon and to Gallic minds.

Albert Samain intrigues those feminine qualities which she

struggles to conceal: curiosity, intuition, and idealisation. His talent is chiefly in the sound, in the poetry of poetry, in the nuances, in the spirit and in the sweet melancholy and dreaminess of the older school. Her admiration does not blind her to the weaknesses of the poet: timidity and hypercriticalness, oversensitiveness, excessive particularity. She neglects to say that Samain's vogue is passed and that the recitation of his poetry is largely confined to young girls, who avail themselves of its charm to display social talent in a drawing-room, and to have an excuse to give vent to the romance which fills their young souls, but which it is unfashionable to exhibit—save when reciting Samain's poetry.

The portrait of Rémy de Gourmont is the best of her studies. She has effaced her own personality sufficiently to allow the full light to penetrate her subject. She has adopted a Latin mind to understand de Gourmont, and although her statement that he will not be appreciated by Anglo-Saxons as he is by French people is probably true, de Gourmont's reputation has steadily grown in this country during the past ten years. The transition by which she carries the reader smoothly over the borderline of Decadence and Symbolism shows how familiar she is with that period of French letters which she calls "one of the greatest of French poetry." She adds: "Never has there been a more fertile moment in any literature. Talents rose to the surface every day." I fancy few French people would admit such a statement, though it is defensible; and the pleiad of poets that sprang up during that period, however misunderstood and ridiculed by their countrymen, have found in her a real champion.

Miss Lowell's admiration for Henri de Régnier is boundless. Although her praises are justified, it is premature to say that "Henri de Régnier is the greatest French poet alive to-day, and one of the greatest poets that France ever had." As a general principle, it is always a delicate matter for a critic to succumb to the easy temptation of *distribution de prix*. Henri

de Régnier may or may not be the greatest French poet. It depends on what is meant by greatest. But the most interesting feature of her study of Henri de Régnier is that she has approached him through his poetry, while he is mostly known and admired for his prose. This is no reflection on her judgment; for Régnier's poetry, noteworthy for its unwontedness, stands as one of the monuments of Symbolism.

Miss Lowell has understood Francis Jammes with the soul of a poet. His talent has appealed to her probably much more than it appeals to less poetical minds. She has drawn a just and highly comprehensible portrait of him. It is composed of lights and shadows, appreciations and criticisms. She has not concealed the simplicity, the infantile, childish make-up of his mentality, and the contentment of his narrow life. Her choice of quotations is good, and she has touched every time the beauty of the verses and the originality of his art. Francis Jammes is not a genius. He has talent and feeling, he responds to his chosen environment with eagerness and understanding, but no one has ever denied that he is a bore, if read at length, and that his style needs polishing and controlling. He is the type of peasant-poet who despises cities and intellectual environment. He has specialised in nature, but does not know enough about the thinking world to widen the scope of his observations. Miss Lowell draws a vivid comparison between "interiority" and "exteriority," and explains their fundamental distinctions. Francis Jammes is essentially a poet of "exteriority" who describes what he sees, with colourful images, in charming prose-verses, but the "interior" has no appeal for him. Miss Lowell has felt this distinction, and because of it she places Jammes in a class of his own, which is probably his only right to immortality.

It was clever of Miss Lowell to study Paul Fort last. He represents an epoch in himself, and is, as it were, a *résumé* of the after-war tendencies of French poetry. She has given him the best light of her intelligence, and is probably the first Amer-

ican writer to lay so much emphasis on the talent—genius even—of Paul Fort. It is astounding how very Gallic her mentality is when she focusses her observations and studies on French minds; she proves a teacher for French people without losing sight of the fact that she is writing for an Anglo-Saxon public. Paul Fort needs no praise in his own country, where he is considered not only the official *Prince des Poètes* but a master, prophet, demigod, and precursor. But he is little known in America, and Miss Lowell with all the finesse of her judgment and the clairvoyance of her intuition, explains this unpopularity.

A new Idealism is seething up through the Materialism that has threatened to submerge this country. It had its birth and growth in the dreams and desires of unknown men. Some of them have become known, and in "Tendencies in Modern American Poetry" she seeks to interpret them and to increase their fame and influence. She writes of Mr. Robinson and Mr. Frost, who have gone higher on Parnassus than any Americans since Poe and Whitman; of Mr. Sandburg and Mr. Masters, who have made Chicago—with the help of Mr. Hansen—the Athens of America; of Mrs. Aldington ("H. D.") and Mr. John Gould Fletcher, two expatriates of whom their country is proud.

In Miss Lowell's view an entire difference of outlook sets the poets of to-day apart from those of the Victorian era. "Ideas believed to be fundamental have disappeared and given place to others." It would have been generous of Miss Lowell had she been more specific and told us in what way the outlook was different. Do we not look upon life and love, original sin and death, property and the family, in the way the Victorians looked upon them? And what ideas have changed save our conception of the atom? Poetry may be the conception of the heart of man, but did the war or its aftermath show that the heart of man has changed materially during the past fifty or a hundred years? The only radical change in that time

is man's professed attitude toward his body. It is no longer considered good form to despise our body, nor are we quite so cocksure as our forebears were that the road to salvation is given a pleasant, propitious grade by scorning and punishing it. We claim greater freedom of thought and action, but the claims are not allowed by public opinion or by legislation.

The new poets, we are informed, rebel against stilted phrases and sentimentality; they endeavour to express themselves and their race; they are forsaking reality for imagery, and they are borrowing the foreigner's best and blending it with their own. That is precisely what poets have always done. That they do it to-day is not a discovery. Conservatism, tradition, sobriety, have appealed only to a certain type of poet, and it appeals to that type to-day as much as it did in the Victorian or the Elizabethan period. It is probable that the majority of people are conservative, beholden to tradition and adverse to radical and abrupt change, be it in thought or action. It is ungenerous to deny them their poets, unjust to taint them with æsthetic unawareness, and absurd to claim they are spoking the wheel of progress. Every century reproaches the previous one with being stilted, archaic, silly, lacking in virility and originality, just as the average young girl thinks her mother old-fashioned, unemotional, and conventional. The heart of the latter, if it could be seen, is often a Niagara; of the former, a noisy brook; the girl has not yet developed

"The sight within that never will deceive,"

and in her blindness she taunts her mother with ignorance of beauty and with insensitiveness to the joy of life.

Miss Lowell, intensely feminine, can scarcely avoid inconsistency. She deprecates the fact that our poets twenty years ago were largely phonographs to greater English poets, and she makes great efforts to convince us that the poets of to-day should be phonographs to the Parnassians, Symbolists,

and Imagists. She is not content to write poetry that excites the admiration of her peers, and interpretation which puts her inferiors under profound obligation; she must also lay down the laws that govern the criticism of art, and she must do it dogmatically, emphatically, and pontifically.

"Art is like politics." Yes, indeed; but what is politics like? "Any theory carried too far ends in sterility." The Darwinian theory, for instance. "True art is the desire of a man to express himself, to record the reactions of his personality to the world he lives in." Mr. William J. Bryan, then, must be the embodiment of true art. He has been big with desire to express himself since the days when he aped Socrates on the banks of the Platte, and he has recorded the reactions of his personality to the world to such extent that record factories must work overtime to supply him. "Great emotion always tends to become rhythmic, and out of that tendency the forms of art have been evolved." So long as pedagogues continue to teach that the best way to learn is by repetition, that phrase will continue to make the rounds; but the narrative of the Garden of Gethsemane and Duse's acting both deny it. "Puritanism has resolved itself into a virulent poison which saps vitality and brings on the convulsions of despair." But it has not sapped the vitality of Edwin Arlington Robinson who, poets and critics agree, is the worthy successor of Poe and Whitman; and convulsions flow from despair only in fiction.

Were Miss Lowell and Dorothy Richardson to blend their intellectual clay and submit it to a phrase-wizard for modelling, a masterpiece worthy of Dostoievsky might be the result; for it would be the embodiment of objectivity and subjectivity impregnated with feminine intuitiveness.

§ 4. Miss Ellen Glasgow

Some will not agree that Miss Ellen Glasgow should be chosen as a member of the *quadrumvirate*. I choose her be-

cause she has told the truth about life as she has observed it and encountered it; because she has set it down in limpid, chaste, rhythmical, resonant English, cast in a form that constitutes art; because she has mastered the technique of the novel; and because she has written tales that are human documents. In style, she has no superior and few peers amongst the fiction-writers of the day in this country. This distinction has been characteristic of all her work since "The Descendant," but it is particularly true of "The Miller of Old Church," "Virginia," and "The Shadowy Third." Intuitively she seems to know the value of atmosphere and background. She has the gift of character delineation and she has learned how to give value to perspective. Moreover, she knows when to let the reader make his own synapses, draw his own inferences and form his own conclusions. She does not preach, or predict, or threaten.

Born in Richmond, Miss Glasgow is content to live there, and it refills the cup of her happiness to recount the temptations, trials, conquests, spiritual and material successes, of her fellow Virginians. Very rarely does she import a character, and she makes them carry on, with few exceptions in the land she knows and loves.

In the vernacular of the day, her people are "real folks." She understands them, likes them, sympathises with them, and sees behind their motives and animations. She takes pride in exhibiting them to us, in showing us how they surmount difficulties, resist temptations, throw off handicaps, and overcome obstacles. But reporting what she has seen and heard does not encompass her whole art. She has ideals and a philosophy of life, and she sees man in relation to the whole world as well as to his fellow-man.

One might conclude from reading any of her novels that she had two purposes: one, to create characters who could bear the burdens that she puts upon them and experience the joys they encounter; and the other, to tell the truth about their be-

haviour. Virginia, for instance, is undoubtedly a true portrait of a young Southern woman after the War of Rebellion. A hundred years hence, or a thousand, any one curious to learn how Virginians looked, thought, acted, and responded to appeals from within or without, can learn reliably from "Virginia"—a book which, when the definitive edition of Miss Glasgow's work is published, I hope will be called "Virginia Pendleton"—and from "The Deliverance" and "The Voice of the People," for in reality they are novels of manners.

Neither critics nor readers have agreed which is Miss Glasgow's best book. From the point of view of construction, "Virginia" is probably the best, but from the point of view of interest "The Romance of a Plain Man" is far superior, and "The Miller of Old Church" will be read for pleasure when "Virginia" is being read for instruction.

I do not recall that, at the time of its publication, the reviewers suggested the similarity of Virginia to Jeanne of "Une Vie," but it would seem that the make-up of a romantic young girl of the early Twenties in France was akin, in the Seventies, to that of a pretty, sensitive Southerner. Virginia is a spiritual first cousin to Jeanne. Their oversensitive temperaments, their romantic outlook on life, and their unusual indulgence in dreams, suggested by *la folle du logis*, cement them into moral relationship. Their latent potencies, their unconscious charm, their old-fashioned pruderies, and their inherent admiration for mere man, together with their natural shyness, make them typical of the past, especially when we witness their blushing confusion on being confronted with the young man of their dreams, the man with eyes as soft as velvet and voice laden with enchantment. Both open their young hearts to life; both find it as impossible to think of their mothers as young girls of twenty as to think of themselves as old women; both, in their respective atmospheres, have been spared the realities of life, are unprepared to fight them; and both believe themselves made for happiness, a special, made-to-order, unusual,

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and unique happiness. They have the same reactions to love and to disappointments, and they are, to-day, a breath of youth, of beauty, freshness, and purity over the world!

Whenever I read Miss Glasgow, I am reminded of Guy de Maupassant. It is not what she says, but the way she says it that recalls his masterpieces. Moreover, I am convinced that the way these two writers mastered their respective languages was very similar, namely, by unending effort, by realisation that talent is long patience. I do not say that Miss Glasgow and Guy de Maupassant were writers by industry and not by the grace of God. I mean to say that they toiled to perfect an endowment which was as natural to each of them as song to a canary, and that success crowned labour.

In discussing his indebtedness to Flaubert, de Maupassant wrote: "Everything you wish to say must be thought over long and attentively, till you can find some aspect of it which no one has yet seen and expressed. . . . To describe a blazing fire, a tree in a plain, it is necessary to stand face to face with that fire or that tree till to us they are totally unlike any other fire or tree. In this way we may become original." Judged by her books, that is what Miss Glasgow has done. She has toiled to find the noun to name the thing she wants to say, the verb to give it motion, the adjective to qualify it; and when she has found them, she has placed them in such juxtaposition, that the eye sweeping over them, or the lips uttering them, find them rhythmical. She is like a mother who, ill at ease and distraught while carrying her child, spares herself no trouble or pain that may contribute to the perfection of her fruit; and, when separate life comes to it, she concentrates instinct, science, and art upon it, that it may in its maturity be a credit to her and of service to the world.

Miss Glasgow's books, particularly those after "The Romance of a Plain Man," reveal her conviction that writing is an art which must have form. Genius may overflow the old forms, and create new ones; but disorganisation is not genius.

The new technique for her is lack of technique. It is easy to slip into iambics in prose; but for one who reveres the English tradition it is the worst kind of prose. It has been her determination to increase the clarity, force, and logic of the English language, rather than to diminish them; and every critic must admit that she has succeeded.

"The Shadowy Third," Miss Glasgow's latest book, is quite different from anything that she has previously done. She has gone from the world of reality into the realm of unreality, from observation and description of the natural to consideration and depiction of the supernatural. In the story that gives title to the volume, she succeeds in creating in the mind of an impressionable, overworked nurse, with a reverence for Dr. Maradick founded in sex-attraction, a conviction of reality that could not have been deeper had Margaret Randolph held in her arms the little girl whose death contributed to Mrs. Maradick's mental illness. And it is accomplished naturally, adroitly, simply, and convincingly. The story, one of crime and retribution, is revealed by suggestion rather than by direct statement. The atmosphere chants the dirge. The second story, "Dare's Gift," particularly the second part, shows Miss Glasgow's finest craftsmanship. It has an epic sweep and comprehensiveness that make it a great story. Most women would prefer to be confronted with Solomon's predicament when he was called upon to pronounce the judgment that helped to make him famous, than to have lived Dare's "high moments." The story shows that Miss Glasgow has always in mind that a tale must have a dual theme: a human story and a great problem. She has never done anything that better entitles her to be called an artist than "Dare's Gift." She has written more than a dozen novels, and her work has shown that practice still makes perfect. Her latest volume convinces me that her best is yet to come.

IV

HEREDITY IN FICTIONAL LITERATURE

DOCTORS have from time immemorial been the target of humourists and satirists. When the shooting is being done, it often seems a cruel and reprehensible sport; but viewed through the vista of time, one realises it is humane and beneficial. It is an important factor in keeping the doctor humble and receptive.

Contempt may pierce the shell of the tortoise, but the arrow saturated with irony and ridicule is the most deadly weapon with which to fight pretence, bombast, and arrogance. Every country and every generation should have a disciple of Rabelais and Molière, who would devote some of his energies to ridiculing the pretences and practices of physicians. I suggest Mr. Elmer Davis for the post in our country, and I am confident that Mr. Aldous Huxley would do admirably for Great Britain. There is one thing I would ask the incumbent of the position, in whatever country, to spare us: further animadversion on the disagreements of doctors. Critics, lawyers, theologians, disagree more than doctors, and their disagreements cause more noise in the world. In fact the inability of theologians to agree may be responsible for more world woe than anything else, for it may have parented prejudice.

We naturally expect scientists to agree on fundamental questions, for we assume that they are dealing with facts. But with the exception of death, seasonal sequence, and the immortality of religious dissension facts are very mutable. Hence I was astonished, a short time ago, to come upon two statements, in regard to heredity, which are superbly dogmatic and splendidly contradictory. Professor Lotsy writes, "Of heredity we know nothing"; and Professor J. H. Morgan, "The problem

of heredity may be said to be solved." One statement is as absurd and as true as the other, and neither is wholly true nor wholly false. Mr. Lotsy strove to say that the human mind cannot grasp or visualise the basic fact of heredity, namely, that the manifoldness of man was once compacted within a microscopic unity, the germ-cell. We cannot grasp it, or understand it, any more than the child can grasp and understand how a *prestidigitateur* can take flag after flag, multi-coloured and rippling, from a pocket containing only a small white handkerchief. Mr. Morgan obviously meant merely to assure us that the hypothesis of the continuity of the germ-plasm has been proved; and that the behaviour of chromosomes, which transmit hereditary characteristics, is so uniform that we can formulate certain statements about them entitled to be called laws.

Though we know some of the facts of heredity, we have not yet guessed the secret of the activity which we call living. But biologists working in the fields of plant and animal life have gone a long way toward clarifying the mysteries of asexual and sexual reproduction, the obscurities of genetic continuity, and toward interpreting the facts of heredity. When one recalls the contributions that have been made in the past two generations by Galton, Weismann, Mendel, De Vries, Bateson, Pearson, Davenport, and many others, one is justified in entertaining the belief that the time is not far distant when we shall understand heredity as fundamentally as the physicist understands the atom, perhaps more so.

The Prophet Ezekiel was assured that he would have no more occasion to use the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." But neurologists and psychiatrists still have to use it; for experience teaches them that man is what he is, because his progenitors were what they were. So long as man eats upon the mountain, lifts up his eyes to Mammon, defiles his neighbour's wife, and does the many other things that he has been told

he must not do, so long shall his descendants' teeth be set on edge, and the psychiatrist's counsel sought to lift the burden of suffering and inefficiency that heredity brings in its train.

Samuel Butler, who had a theory of heredity as dissonant from fact as his belief in the feminine authorship of the "Odyssey," held that the phenomena exhibited by heredity, as regards both instinct or structure, are mainly due to memory of past experiences, accumulated and fused till they have become automatic, or nearly so. He taught that personal identity was gained by us when we were in the persons of our forefathers. The Freudians have appropriated this idea without making reference to that extraordinary combination of artist and scientist, who probably got it from Lamarck. "Life, then, is memory," was Butler's conclusion. He went further than Wordsworth, who said, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy," for he maintained that the kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of little children. I have been for a long time convinced that Samuel Butler was a joy-killer; and the more I read and reread him, the more convinced I am. "The Way of All Flesh," which may be taken as a practical illustration of his theory of heredity, served, however, one good purpose: it provided the world with something other than the products of his own hermesian fancy and gargantuan industry that Mr. G. Bernard Shaw could praise.

According to Butler, it is not, as a general rule, the eating of sour grapes that causes children's teeth to be set on edge. "Well-to-do parents seldom eat many sour grapes. The danger to the children lies in the parents eating too many sweet ones."

It is more than likely that the biology of the future will teach the evolutionary importance of nurture. Of its importance to the individual there is not the shadow of a doubt; for the degree to which factors in the natural inheritance find expression depends on the appropriateness of nurtural condi-

tions. Nevertheless, Ezekiel's reputation as a prophet has been enhanced by modern science, while that of Butler has not.

It is distressing to think that we can accomplish so little by taking thought, wooing beauty, and winning environment; that the shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy. But, if experience teaches, such is the lesson which every physician learns. Strangely enough, despite this, heredity plays a small rôle in fiction. One would think that the novelist would have seized upon its potentialities and its display with the same avidity and determination with which he seized upon the theories associated with the name of Freud. But he has not done so, and aside from Ibsen, Dostoievsky, and Zola, few of the masters have concerned themselves largely with it, or depicted its dominancy and immutability.

In "The House of the Seven Gables," Hawthorne showed that the weaknesses and defects, the bad passions, the mean tendencies, and the moral diseases which lead to crime, are handed down from one generation to another by a far surer process of transmission than man-made law has been able to establish in respect to the riches and honours which it seeks to entail upon posterity. The character and conduct of Judge Pyncheon are portrayed in consonance with present-day teachings of biology. It is well established that the romance was interwoven with incidents from the history of the Hawthorne family. And it will occur to some that the curse pronounced upon its members, that God would give his enemy "blood to drink" may still be in force, even though the Pyncheons and the Maules blended their natures in the descendants of Phœbe and Holgrave.

It is nearly a hundred years since Théophile Gautier wrote "Mademoiselle de Maupin," a book that roiled more literary water than any contemporary novel. Time has given it that which it gave Judge Pyncheon, the outward features of respectability. But the discerning eye sees the corruption in both.

At that time nothing scientifically was known of biology, though Buffon, Haller, and others had successfully nurtured the clamorous infant. And the acceptable laws of heredity had not been drafted. It does not astonish us that the extraordinary pattern of schizophrenia cut in durable cloth before Bleuler or Kahlbaum were born, that strange paradigm of narcissimus which must be pleasing to the Freudians, the Chevalier d'Albert, is permitted to say: "I am not of my family; I am not a branch of that noble tree, but a poisonous mushroom thrust up by the powers of stormy night through its venerable roots. I am sure if one should go back six generations, there would not be found amongst my ancestors one atom that resembled that from which I was formed." The only thing surer in the world than that one just like him would have been found, is that the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution will never stop the consumption of alcohol by many of those who swear, whenever they seek permission to leave this country, that they will uphold the document which Gladstone said was the most meritorious that had emanated from the mind of modern man.

In "Ghosts," Ibsen staged a potential general paretic who inherited not only the disease from which paresis flows, but his father's attitude toward sex morality as well. Oswald Alving, on his return from Paris, where he has had a successful career as painter, is convinced that his salvation and happiness hang upon the complaisance of his mother's maid. She is his half-sister, though he does not know it, and is gaited as her mother was when she was a servant in the Alving household and Captain Alving, Chamberlain to the King, had his way with her.

The Captain, of irresistible charm, had an uncontrollable desire for drink, and no morals. He married a woman of ideals, intelligence, and morality, who tolerated and concealed her husband's infirmities for their son's sake; but when Oswald was seven years old, convinced that the child would be

poisoned by breathing the polluted air of their home, she sent him away, and also denied herself conjugality, thus provoking the disapprobation of Pastor Manders, a pious hypocrite, whose past did not tolerate scrutiny. The erring maid-servant's way to a husband was mediated by a small amount of money, and the child was brought up as Mrs. Alving's, and became her confidential maid. Denied the transports and satisfactions of family life, Mrs. Alving found vent for her emotion in work that redounded to her husband's credit, and for her maternal cravings in the assurances of her child's safety. When Captain Alving died, she raised a memorial to him; and she looked forward to meeting her son, whose career seemed to have justified the means she had adopted to protect him.

During the year preceding his home-coming, Oswald had been strangely unable to go on with his work. He consulted a doctor, who told him that he had been worm-eaten from birth. "The sins of the father are visited upon the children." But Mrs. Alving said: "It is not only what we have inherited from our fathers and mothers that 'walks' in us. It is all sorts of dead ideas and lifeless old beliefs. They have no vitality, but they cling to us all the same, and we cannot get rid of them." Sherwood Anderson, in "Seeds," one of his many efforts to depict the hold and display of original sin, repeats it: "The lives of people are like young trees in a forest; they are being choked by clinging vines. The vines are old thoughts and beliefs planted by dead men." And as Oswald becomes more conscious of his disease, he reaches out for that which destroys the sense of responsibility and assuages fear—alcohol.

Ibsen undoubtedly had in mind to depict the potency of heredity to determine conduct as well as bodily (or physical) and mental characteristics. It is admitted that heredity has such power, but it is a mistake for the reader of "Ghosts" to assume that infirmities called vices are frequently transmitted directly. The son of a drunkard is more likely to become a

drunkard than a poet or an artist; but it does not at all follow that he will become the slave of drink. Nor does it follow that the daughter of a wayward mother will walk in her footsteps: it is quite as likely that she will become a nun, or elect a career of emotional determination.

"Ghosts" is a drama constructed of selected material. An architect may build a house with timber and lumber that is riddled with knots, and the visitor to such a house might conclude that all building material is knotty, providing he had not seen other houses or would not see them. There are human materials like the Alvings, the Engstrands, and Manders, but fortunately they are not often in juxtaposition to carry on; and the convincing thing about it is that Oswald's amatory reflex and gonadal sweep were exactly like his father's.

Oswald, presented as a victim of general paresis, is most unconvincing. The hallmark of that disease is deficient insight: the individual no longer sees himself in the proper perspective, and therefore he does not sense his infirmities. When Oswald consulted "one of the first doctors in Paris," and when the "old cynic" told him with such unwarrantable positiveness of the nature of his disease, he became overwhelmed with the ruin of his life which he had brought upon himself; and from that moment he began to bemoan his fate and to wish that he could live over again, and undo all that he had done. The general paretic may act that way perhaps once in a thousand times, but in the other nine hundred and ninety-nine times he begins to display self-satisfaction and to plan world-ordering on a scale that knows no bound. Moreover, Oswald's interview with his mother, when he apprises her of his doom and says that his only hope now is in Regina, is entirely inconsistent with the display of that disease.

Paretics do not clamour for the sun, they offer it.

Zola is the only writer who has made heredity the fulcrum, lever, and load of his books. The Rougon-Macquart series of novels, which extends to twenty volumes, is a narrative of the

virtues and vices, the diseases and doings, of Adélaïde Fouque, whom we encounter, in the concluding volume of the series, "Doctor Pascal," in a Provençal asylum at the venerable age of 104, a harmless lunatic in the advanced stages of terminal dementia. She had borne three children, one legitimate and two illegitimate. The father of the first, Pierre Rougon, was a placid, lethargic, fat gardener. Macquart, the father of the latter two, was a smuggler, a drunkard given to psychopathic episodes. The mental and physical characteristics of the parents are equally blended in the legitimate son; and he marries an intelligent, active, healthy woman, who has five children by him. The comparatively normal individuals who play a part in the Rougon-Macquart series have their origins in this family. It is through the illegitimate children of Adélaïde Fouque—Aunt Dide she was called—that the degenerates of the series flow, though they themselves, Antoine and Ursula Macquart, are not distressingly abnormal—intolerance, harshness, and alcoholism being the conspicuous failings of the former, while the latter dies of tuberculosis.

Zola reveals his comprehensive insight into the ways of heredity by bringing on individuals in the third generation who have ability and equilibrium. There are fifteen members of that generation, and amongst them are a politician, who becomes deputy and cabinet minister: Docteur Pascal, who, having earned a moderate competence and the love and respect of his patients, withdrew to his villa and gave himself over to experiments, and to the physical and moral regeneration of man; a promoter and speculator who became a newspaper director; and a successful shop-keeper. Zola also brings on a choice lot of derelicts: Sidonie, a procuress and go-between in every shady calling, who late in life becomes religious and most austere; Martha, hysterical and with a moral make-up resembling that of her grandmother; and François Mouret, first cousin and husband of Martha, who becomes mad, and commits suicide in the most spectacular way by throwing him-

self into a fire which Martha herself had kindled. To other members of this generation, Zola gives the physical and moral prepotency of one of the ancestors, without making it so overwhelming as to be conspicuous.

In the fourth generation, crabbed, sour fruit is borne in great abundance. Maxime Rougon, a wastrel and a spendthrift of humour and money, dies of locomotor ataxia, which at that time was not yet proven to be a manifestation of a protozoal, communicable disease. Victor Rougon disappears, and no trace of him is ever found; Angélique Rougon dies of a mysterious disease; Serge Mouret displays a neurosis early in life, but he becomes a priest and a profound mystic; Désirée Mouret, an idiot of no character, develops hereditary disease of the spinal cord, which causes paralysis and ataxia. Practically every moral and physical stigma of degeneracy is described in these persons of Zola's drama.

Zola always overplayed his hand, save possibly in the Dreyfus case. However, there can be little doubt that there have been, and are, such families as the Rougon-Macquart, but they are very exceptional. Zola's error was in making the "unit characters" appear too frequently. It has not yet been decided whether the Mendelian inheritance is the universal way, or whether divergent characters of the parents may sometimes blend in the offspring so that intergrades result.

Zola was primarily a reformer, an advocate. He imposed upon himself the task of righting the wrongs of others. He believed that much of the vice and degradation of the human species is due to hereditary influences. He scarcely needed to prove it, save to the ever-diminishing minority who pretend that environment is as powerful as heredity to shape one's destiny and make-up.

In "The Three Black Pennys," Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer has striven to show that the laws of heredity are immutable; that bad blood drags a wholesome, virile family to the depths of mental, if not physical, decadence. His argument is made

doubly forceful by the figures in the episodes, who leap out at once from the printed page in startling reality. They live, laugh, love, dare, die, as becomes men and women, whether it be charming Caroline, wayward Jasper, sensuous Essie, or modern Mariana.

The Penny family was an average normal one, until a Welsh strain was introduced, many generations back. This strain, instead of diffusing itself throughout the descendants, cropped out in all its sinister completeness every third or fourth generation; cropped out in a black Penny, like a black pea, in the garden of the venerable Abbot of Brunn.

The first black Penny that we encounter is Howat, who lived in the early eighteenth century at Myrtle Forge, the Penny iron mines of Pennsylvania. He is a repressed, solitary antinomian, who falls in love with Ludowika, half Polish, half English, the wife of his father's distinguished English guest, Felix Winscombe. Howat's relations with her transcend convention; but the two are able to save their faces by the timely death of Ludowika's husband.

The second black Penny comes along in the middle of the nineteenth century. He inherits the characteristics of the first, and in a more marked degree he takes what he wants from life, gives what pleases him, and denies the day of reckoning. After the death of his first wife, a Dresden-china figure, he becomes enamoured of Essie Scofield, by whom he has an illegitimate daughter. Finding that Essie has misused the money given her for the care of Eunice, he buys her off and himself supervises the education of the child, gives her his name and provides for her in his will. When he is nearing fifty, he marries Susan Brundon, "a schoolmistress, but superior, and a lady, curiously ignorant of the world, but rare, rare. It almost seems as if there were a conspiracy to keep ugly truth away from her." They have one child, James, somatically normal, but mentally weak and indolent.

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The third black Penny, another Howat, grandson of Jasper and Susan, inherits the weak will and mind of his father James. He is "an old man without family, without the supporting memory of actual achievement, the negative decay of a negative existence"; and his niece Mariana, in whom the first Howat and Jasper, striking contemptuously across the barriers of social morals, lived, spends much time with him at Myrtle Forge. Mariana gives her heart to James Polder, who inherits the bad blood of his grandmother and his great-grandmother, Essie Scofield, but will not marry him. Polder is one of the rising men in the new iron industry, yet lacking in the refinement and culture which is the essence of Mariana's make-up. In a spiteful rage he marries Harriet de Barry, an actress, with the customary result, and finally becomes Mariana's affinity.

It is a well-wrought screen, upon which are displayed the laws of heredity that have so far been established. The homogeneity of the transmission and the heterogeneity of the display are admirably featured; while one quality, sensitiveness to music, keeps coming in to all the degenerates like the Marseillaise refrain in Tchaikovsky's overture "1812."

Mrs. Beatrice Kean Seymour, a present-day novelist who makes no pretence to scientific knowledge and who displays no reformatory urge, has woven the subject of heredity in a subtle way into "The Hopeful Journey." She has brought upon the children of the Bentley-Norman families the temperamental peculiarities, the inborn potencies and weaknesses, of their parents; and though their infirmities are not as conspicuous or their display so dramatic as those of the Pennys, they are quite as interesting.

Grandfather Jeremy Bentley was a hedonist who chose farming as a profession in preference to the Church, who made the pursuit of women a pastime, and who was never quite happy with either unless his wife was humiliated. His wife, Judith,

a pale, effaced and romantic woman, was fond of her husband, but soon lost her idealism of marriage and the love of her husband.

Their five children found fulfilment in various ways: Huldah in her beauty and in her contempt for her mother; Mary, of sluggish hormones, which gave her a reputation for virtue, in the daily interests of the parish and village gossip; Beth, sexually endowed like her father, in eloping with a married man; Eve, uxorially and in politics; and Clive, a puny, pretty, indolent, carefree boy, happy because he had no wants, in the army.

Eve was cold-blooded, pitied her mother because she was weak, and had a haughty contempt for her father. She first revolted against the world when she learned of her father's past, and despised her mother for "putting up." She had a number of wooers, but rejected them all. Eventually she married a well-off dentist, a philanthropic, artistic dreamer. Long after her marriage she discovered that her husband had had a love-affair with one of his cousins, and had not told her. She was disgusted, could neither understand nor forgive, and made his last years miserable.

Eve's children are composites of the harshness and sexuality of their grandfather, their grandmother's weakness, their father's artistic temperament, and Eve's clear conception of life and desire. Monica is endowed with her father's artistic disposition, his charm, and his gifts. She neither understood her mother nor had any understanding from her. She took after her aunt Beth. Her gonadal reflex was high, and she was the mistress of her fiancé, killed in the war. She married Shane Mostyn, selfish, unattractive, fond of women, and ambitious to a fault, who made a success of his literary life. He had had a scandalous love-affair with an adventuress, unhappily married. He and Monica had not hidden their past from each other; but while Monica remained faithful to her husband, he "picked up the lost threads" and fled to America

with Patricia, while his son was dying, and returned addicted to drugs and drink, a family inheritance which "always manifested itself when the man was thirty years old."

Mark, a mother-sapped youth, conscious of his inferiority, though straight, honest, and rigid on conventions, loved a married woman whose husband would not divorce her; and so he gave her up, "without having kissed her once," and went to Canada, where he might father a hobo or a poet, a prophet or a pariah.

We all know Bentley-Norman families, and on casual acquaintance none of the members seems particularly abnormal. Mrs. Seymour has skilfully allotted dominant traits and emotional characteristics to the descendants, just as she might have described physical resemblances to ancestors which no one thinks it remarkable that an individual should inherit. Mr. Frank Swinnerton has done much the same thing in "The Happy Family." Whether any young person reading these or similar novels will be led thereby to reflect before going forth to people the earth, and as the result of such reflection choose a partner whose ancestors have revealed more beatitudes than deadly sins, it is difficult to say. But probably he will not. However, the day may soon come in this country when we shall marry according to the constitution. And fiction is one of the best ways to apprise us that character is more securely to be had from breeding than from precept; that good marks count for a lot in salvation, but for very little in evolution.

"Heritage" is a novel that had a day's notoriety ten years ago. It was written by Valentina Hawtrey, who apparently has not arrived. It is an improbable, impossible story of inheritance, temper, impulsiveness, determination, and obstinacy, on the one hand, and of the artistic temperament amalgamated with altruism, on the other.

Shortly after the birth of her only child, Rose Louise found she could not stand Nathaniel Pimblett; so she left him and

their son Martin, and trod the stage to easy, prolonged success. Martin grew up the exact replica of his father: harsh, impetuous, domineering, unyielding, unforgiving, and unloving. By nature a misogynist, the father brought up the boy to despise women. And when his father died, Martin looked about for an heir. He selected a nephew, Cyril, and invited him to Pimblett's Court. One day they quarrelled, and Martin went out and married. His wooing of Catherine Dawes, steady of head and strong of limb, a blend of her father's poetic temperament and her mother's practicality, is the only high light in the book. She promptly bears a son, to whom is given his paternal grandfather's name, for he is to inherit Pimblett's Court. What he does inherit is his mother's disposition and equanimity, his paternal grandfather's poetic temperament, his maternal grandmother's terpsichorean trend, and, with them all, hatred and contempt of his father. When the latter realises all this, he forages in his mind how to break the entail. Cyril comes on the scene opportunely after twenty years' absence, and Martin Pimblett at once realises that he is a Pimblett of blood and traditions, and that his own son is but an expression of the continuity of Rose Louise.

Nathaniel does not give him a chance to disinherit him. He disinherits himself; and his mother, who is ill, dies of joy over it. "Catherine laughed, looking up at him with tenderness, pleasure, and amusement. Her pretty, gay laughter rang up clearly, then quite suddenly it stopped. The room became extraordinarily silent. Her face was still turned toward him, there was still a smile on her lips, but she had changed. . . . In that moment of laughter the Death which she had been expecting so long had come as easily as sleep." One of the most inartistic and impossible dénouements I have met in modern literature!

Another novel of this kind, though infinitely less interesting, is "Predestined," by Stephen French Whitman, published

about fifteen years ago. It aims to describe the conduct of a youth who would be called a degenerate by biologists but who was merely a misologist. His degeneracy he got from his father, whose mind underwent evolution prematurely; while his good looks and suavity came from his mother, if one may trust a photograph, for she did not live long enough to stamp her attributes on the memories of those who had known her. From childhood, Felix Piers never reached the place he started for at the time he planned to be there. He always got distracted, impeded, side-tracked. Despite this, the author constantly informs the reader that the hero is so attractive that both men and women succumb to his charm. Without such assurance it would be beyond belief; for that which is revealed to us is an ordinary young man, weak, inefficient, and aboulic, with no asset save self-confidence and good manners. After wading through three of his love-experiences, one reaches the last chapter with a sense of relief, sorry to have ever made Felix's acquaintance.

It needs the flowing pen of a Balzac or a Dostoievsky to make the detailed recital of the slow degeneration of a human falling-star interesting. And though Mr. Whitman may have been encouraged to believe that he possessed such a pen his silence since then indicates that he was but a sputterer.

When the generation that is now passing began to read novels, they often found in them dissertations on the heritability of tuberculosis. I recall reading such a book twenty-five years ago. It was called "The Open Question." It was written by Elizabeth Robins, an American woman of artistic temperament and distinctive intellect, who would have been one of our leading novelists, had she given half the attention to the form of her stories that she gave to the behaviour of her characters. One will recall her as the author of "A Dark Lantern," which gave an illuminating account of the "rest cure" and its devotees. "The Open Question," a long, ro-

mantic, formless story, purports to be the tale of two temperaments, those of Valeria and Ethan Gano, whose family the Civil War had ruined, and disease had decimated.

Valeria, a spirited, imaginative Southern girl, of artistic temperament and determination, falls in love with Ethan, equally talented and temperamental, but who, having been brought up in Boston, is more pragmatic than hedonistic. In the Midwest town to which the Gano family flees after its Virginia possessions had been destroyed by the war, Valeria and her little sister grow up with an austere grandmother and a tender-minded father. There is a ghost that haunts the fort of their frontier home. Though Valeria did not know it, that ghost was consumption. "My father and my wife died of it," Valeria's father said. "My mother has the lingering form of it. It was 'galloping consumption' that carried my sister out of the world at thirty. I am dying of it, my children." Both children developed it; but Valeria, who had a prenuptial agreement with Ethan that they would exhaust all resources to outwit Minotaurs, got into a little sail-boat with her husband and headed her, in the teeth of a storm, for the Golden Gate.

This novel was published fifteen or more years after Koch had demonstrated the specific causation of tuberculosis. One gains from it an idea of how slowly scientific knowledge spreads to the public, and how valuable a channel fiction may be made to disseminate truth. Biologists tell us that the wan and blind proteus of the Dalmatian caves has the hereditary capacity of developing pigment; but it will not do so if it remains in darkness, its normal environment. If it is brought into the light, it soon darkens; if it is reared from infancy in the light, its eye will be less degenerate than it is in the caves.

No matter how specific the teaching of heredity, people by and large believe that the factors and forces which we subsume under the term environment are far more potent than heredity for good or for ill. It makes for happiness, for

reconciliation to life to foster this belief. At least it does only harm to deny environment potentiality of good, and it has tremendous sentimental value.

In one of her shorter stories, "Sanctuary," Mrs. Edith Wharton seeks to show that though the temptations of the father are visited upon the son, they can be checkmated by the virtues of the mother—that environment sometimes beats heredity. No one save Denis Peyton knew that his step-brother Arthur had made a *mésalliance*. When Arthur's widow claimed her dower rights without proof of the marriage, Denis did not raise his voice. When the court decided that Arthur's wealth should go to his brother, the widow drowned herself and her baby.

Denis, betrothed to Kate Orme, high-minded, honest, and scrupulous, told her his part in the affair. She believed the only way he could atone for his sin was to make public acknowledgment. Denis did not agree. But they got married, and Dick was born, grew, and was bred to be an architect, and like most young men of that profession he went in for competitions. His friend, Paul Darrow, had finished his sketch, and Dick's was still under preparation, when Paul died of pneumonia, leaving a letter which authorised Dick to use his drawing for the competition. Mrs. Peyton is torn with conflicting emotions, desire to see her son win the prize, and fear that he will make use of Paul Darrow's permission, thus obtaining recognition for a work that would not be his. A struggle takes place in the hearts of the three persons. Dick is engaged to Clemence Verney, a worldly person, who urges him to use Paul's sketch; but eventually Dick succeeds in fighting the temptation. He gives up the competition. Victory compensated Mrs. Peyton: "I am an abysmally weak fool, you know. I'm not worth the fight you put up for me. But I want you to know that it's your doing—that if you had let go an instant I should have gone under—and that if I'd gone under I should never have come up again alive."

Mrs. Wharton's thesis is opposed by that of another novelist of her sex, George Eliot.

"The Spanish Gipsy" was written to illustrate how the inheritance of definite streams of impulses, stored up in what we call race, often puts a tragic veto upon effort of spontaneous individual emotion, of volition to ignore or defy their control, and to emancipate itself from the tyranny of their despotic and cruel rule. One sees in every page of the poem the influence of the Darwinian doctrines, which were then novel, so far as they are applicable at all to moral characteristics and causes. The poem paints with tragic force how the threads of hereditary capacity and hereditary sentiment control, as with invisible cords, the orbits of even the most powerful characters; how the fracture of those threads, so far as it can be accomplished by will, may have even greater effect in wrecking character than moral degeneration; how the man who trusts and uses the hereditary forces which natural descent has bestowed upon him becomes a might and a centre in the world, while the man, perhaps intrinsically the nobler, who dissipates his strength by trying to swim against the stream of his past, is neutralised and paralysed by the vain effort; and finally, how a divided past, a past not really homogeneous, may weaken this kind of power, instead of strengthening it by the command of a larger experience.

I fancy every one will admit that suicide in this era is rarely accomplished by a sane individual. It frequently happens that a son perpetrates the deed in the same way that his father did. The event testifies a similar psychosis in parent and descendant, and as the mental derangement is hereditary, it does no violence to fact to say that the suicidal impulse is inherited. It is a favourite theme of the novelist. Sometimes it is used to bolster up the plot, or to give the quality of suspense to the story; but oftener the writer poses it as a problem to be solved, as, for instance, in a recent French novel of Paul Bourget, "La Geôle."

It is natural that M. Bourget, who had a physician's training, should be convinced that heredity is a prison from which few escape, and that only love mitigates the rigours of such imprisonment. Jean Vialis has inherited a nervous, impressionable temperament from his paternal uncle, who shot himself when he was twenty-eight. Other members of the family also have committed suicide. To counteract the hereditary taint, Jean was given a virile, martial education. He became a successful lawyer, went into politics, and was soon the right-hand man of a "Ministre."

A few weeks before the general elections, Jean had been entrusted by his chief with an important but compromising letter, which he neglected to put in the safe. During his absence, a college friend saw, read, and stole the letter, and used it with such success that not only was Jean's party defeated at the elections, but the letter, appearing in the newspapers, was the ruin of Jean and the dishonour of his chief. Too overwhelmed to answer, after his chief had accused him of having violated all discretion and honesty, Jean went home and shot himself. Vernat, the family doctor, made Madame Vialis realise that her duty was to guard Jean-Marie, a frail child subject to fits of temper and tantrums, from his heredity, and to hide from him the cause of his father's death. When he reached the age of twenty-five, Jean-Marie, nervous, temperamental, generous, and impulsive, married Sabine Lancelot. Their son Réné was four years old when Juliette was born. Soon after, Sabine began to show dislike and despite of her husband; and Jean-Marie, hurt in his love, and jealous of his wife, is convinced that she is deceiving him. Madame Jean Vialis had the same impression; and the resemblance between Juliette and Saintenois, a college friend of Jean-Marie's, is so striking, that there is little doubt as to who is Juliette's father. Saintenois contracts a gambling debt, and gives his club a check, without funds to pay it. Sabine receives a visit from Madame Vialis, who accuses her of being the

mistress of Saintenois, and tells her of the latter's dishonesty. The despair of Sabine is so spontaneous that it leaves no doubt as to the culpability of her daughter-in-law. Madame Jean Vialis begs Sabine to break with Saintenois, promising in turn that she will not inform her son. Sabine rushes to Saintenois' apartment and finds him ready to leave the country. She implores him to take her; but he refuses, because of his scruples to enjoy her fortune. He promises that as soon as he makes good he will send for her and Juliette. Sabine returns home, heart-broken, but decides to obey her lover's orders. She shows no trace of emotion when Jean-Marie tells her the news regarding Saintenois; and this, with what his mother has told him, suffices to reassure Jean-Marie, who is ashamed of his suspicion. One morning, Sabine goes to London, incapable of standing any longer the separation from Saintenois, who has not written to her since he left Paris. She has taken Juliette with her, and has left a letter for her husband, revealing to him the paternity of the little girl, and asking him to forgive her, telling him that his mother has known it for years.

Jean-Marie is frantic. He rushes to his mother, accuses her of complicity, and leaves her precipitately. She knows he is going to kill himself. She goes to his home and tells him of his father's death, of the care she has taken to hide the truth from him, as Vernat had suggested. He tells her the impulse to kill himself has been with him since childhood, and that he should have been told, in order that he might have had an opportunity to fight his heredity, especially as it is evident that ignorance does not prevent it from manifesting itself. Then both decide to try to save Réné. They do not have to struggle very long, for he is killed in battle. But after the death of Saintenois, who behaved admirably in the War, and the death of Sabine, Jean-Marie takes Juliette into his home, and brings her up as his own child, thus doing service for the grace that had been vouchsafed him.

The Hungarian novelist, Maurus Jokai, also made hereditary suicide, or what seemed to be that, the thesis of "Debts of Honour." For seven generations, the men in the Aronffy family have taken their own lives. The story deals with two brothers, Lorand and Desiderius. At the opening of the story their father, though apparently normal and happy, commits suicide, and is interred in the vault at their country estate. The fear of the surviving mother and grandmother is that the two sons will inherit this curse. While still a young man, Lorand and an acquaintance, to settle a point of honour, draw their names, written on slips of paper, from a hat. The one drawing his own name must ten years later take his own life. At the expiration of the ten years, it is learned through Desiderius, who held the hat, that the affair was a fraud. Lorand's name had been written on the slip of paper which his opponent had put into the hat. Thus the debt of honour which threatened to exterminate the Aronffys was shown to be an unjust debt, and Lorand marries and lives happily ever after.

In one of his early novels, M. Pierre Veber mocked good-naturedly the pretensions of the teachings of heredity, and the fatalism it carries with it. At the end of a good dinner, the Prince of Thune, a queer old chap, says: "It cannot be denied that atavism, this modern form of fatality, weighs heavily on our life. Personally, I feel myself at the mercy of a group of influences that I should qualify as ancestral, if the French Academy had not recently condemned that adjective. I know I have not a bad nature, but I know also that I am a battlefield where a number of my forebears are in a murderous combat, and I am powerless. Temperance would have been my dominant quality, had not one of my antecedents, and a most recent one at that, opposed it with all his might. This man, a Captain in the Gendarmerie in 1826, was a ferocious tyrant, and now, every time I pass a glass of cognac, he shoots out my hand to grasp it, and then he compels me to drink the beastly alcohol.

"I have always thought that work was man's destiny in this rotten world, and I should have turned to it with all the ardour of a passionate soul, had it not been for one of my ancestors, a bureaucrat of 1802. He was of extraordinary indolence, and now he inhibits my forces every moment, and at every effort.

"I am as gentle as a lamb; I hate violence; I hold that an honest man should not beat a woman, even with a club; how does it then come that sometimes I get into attacks of uncontrollable temper? It is because I am pushed to it by a former school-teacher, in the College de Montaigu (1670), who struck his pupils right and left, whether they answered yes or no.

"My cupidity I am forced to confess was transmitted to me from a garbage collector.

"I abbreviate the list of my shortcomings and refrain from mentioning the rare qualities that I got from some discreet creature, for they are lost in the thicket of my dominant heritage. No matter how hard I try, I shall not escape the domination of two of my forefathers, one of them a thief, and the other an assassin. That there may be no doubt about their names, I put them down: Adam and Cain.

"Did you ever stop to think that every one like myself carries in his heart a group of ancestors who sometimes slumber, sometimes stretch, sometimes carry on? I picture them to myself as so many grave gentlemen, each having a particular physiognomy; they circulate around me; come and go, talk and laugh, recall the past and forecast the future.

"Suddenly, without warning, one hurls himself upon the other; they scrap, they quarrel, lose their dignity, tear each other to pieces, reproach each other with a thousand villainies, act as if they were on the peristyle of the Stock Exchange. Then calm comes again; I enjoy a little tranquillity, and I wait a new accession. The following day this begins again, the same as the day before, and it will continue for years, until, in my turn, I shall make trouble for my descendants."

It is of advantage to the world that the facts of heredity be submitted by fiction; that literature has easily a hundred readers, possibly a thousand, where biology has one. The novelist who will convince us by his creation that the divergent characters of parents may blend in the offspring so that intergrades result, will do a great service, though he may bring down on his head the wrath of the Mendelians. But we should ask proof of real, not apparent blending. If he should create a hero or heroine who, by taking thought, would eliminate a family taint, and at the same time make love rapturously and over as long a period as love can be made, then transform it into respect and stamp it with permanency, it might turn the thoughts of youth from jazz to eugenics, a thing that cannot be accomplished by pleading or by prayer.

But if novelists will not consider it pragmatically, they should be encouraged to do it pedagogically; for in that way they will do something to stem the wave of emotionalism which constantly threatens to submerge this nation.

V

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MIDGET

ALL the world loves a lover, and all the world marvels at a midget. His appearance in the street, upon the stage, in any public place is the signal for display of concentrated curiosity. It is not difficult to explain the interest in midgets. Miniatures of every kind: babies, little pigs, tiny gardens, microscopic writing, fascinate us. Are midgets as happy as the ordinary man whose handicaps are sometimes more profound, though less visible? Is not the latter blind to beauty, deaf to life's harmonies, heartless and selfish, more to be pitied than the midget capable of disinterested action, sensitive and responsive to loveliness and beauty? An Arab proverb says that the finest perfumes are in the smallest bottles. It is difficult to believe that such tiny creatures as midgets can have the ideas and ambitions, the hopes and despairs, the prejudices and indulgences, the pleasures and the pains that we have. It is humiliating that our bulk does not provide the qualities they possess. Our natural vanity and our engendered arrogance are upset by observation of midgets. Some of our interest in them is doubtless due to the fact that they excite, quite unconsciously, the protective, parental impulse inherent in the human species, but as a rule midgets do not encourage display of such feeling.

Now that midgets have become central figures in fiction we anticipate not alone revelation of their psychology, but wherein it differs from that of their somatic superiors. How must the world peopled and run by men and women of normal stature seem to one so like and yet so tragically unlike that no qualities of mind or soul can ever bridge the difference or make him for a moment forget he is a freak or a monstrosity? What are

the feelings of midgets toward God and man, and what does life mean for them? Do they resent and protest the handicap of nature which makes them a source of amusement and an object of pity? How do their actions and reactions, their urges and inhibitions compare with those whose hormones have not failed them? Are their minds and hearts and souls of the same quality and quantity as those whose physique is full size?

These questions have recently been answered, not satisfactorily nor adequately indeed, but artistically by two novels, "Memoirs of a Midget," by Walter de la Mare, and "Le Grand d'Espagne," by François de la Guérinière. The former is a writer with an established reputation for there has been contention amongst those who "discovered" him, and moreover, he is a poet, and this book is a revelation of the poetic temperament. The latter, though he has four books to his credit, is a newcomer, and a materialist. "The Spanish Grandee" shows him to be a keen observer with an acquired knowledge of the human heart.

While each of these books is a study of the psychology of the midget, the juxtaposition of the two affords the reader, sufficiently lured by the enigmatic in the human soul to hunt it through the tangled trail to its secret lair, the quintessence of the answers to the questions: "What is this world of ours to the midget?" and "What are the reactions of the midget to our world?" The work of a student, however broad his view, deep his study, or far-reaching his sympathy, could not have compassed the subject as have these two bits of fiction: one the work of an Englishman, the other of a Frenchman; one the expression of an Anglo-Saxon poetic temperament, the other of the Gallic literal and conventional; one portraying the soul of a man, the other that of a woman; one the dirge of a great intellect and passions emprisoned, the other the chant of a great spirit whose prison was too feeble to hold it; one the poisoning of personality by the virus of bitterness, the other its

growth through the food of philosophy; one the triumph of the abnormal body over the normal soul, the other the triumph of a heroic soul over an insulted body. It is true that finally the Grandee yields to the inevitable—the only alternative being self-destruction in some more or less speedy way—and accepts the career which his parents had planned for him, and makes a success of it. But his gesture is one of defeat—the soul capitulating to the tyranny of the body and accepting the only terms upon which a truce can be declared—and the last glimpse the reader has of him is the defiant glance from his imperious eyes which testifies that he is still an embittered prisoner of life, instead of a triumphant conqueror of it.

The English heroine loves and loses, bucks the world and is beaten, then disappears. Possibly midgets yield to a smaller measure of defeat than full-sized men and women. Mr. de la Mare's charming narrative purports to be the autobiography of "Miss M.," an English woman of the cultured middle-class confided to a friend to be published after her death. In a way, it may be looked upon as the spiritual autobiography of a poet, and of a particular poet, the author.

The atmosphere of the book conveys the personality of the heroine. From the first pages to the last the reader is captivated by Midgetina, despite the author's style which is anything but limpid, and despite the symbolism and imagery of much of the text.

We do not know that Miss M., like the Grandee of Spain, was the replica of an ancestor. We are told nothing of her forebears save that she was the only child of a whimsical, unpractical father and a gentle, sensible mother, and the pet of an adoring step-grandfather who from his home in France lavished upon her fanciful presents suited to her tiny stature.

As a baby she was like all other babies and grew into girlhood, ignorant that she was abnormal; her parents never gave vent to their feelings of disappointment, and the only thing that made Midgetina suspect she was different was that her

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mother never seemed to understand her. Even in her teens, she was treated by her like a child and Midgetina felt it was her duty to conform her mind and her manners to her mother's.

Realisation of her minute stature dawned upon her when Adam, a village boy, laughed at her. This was a shock, but she soon forgot the unhappy incident, for she never went out and the few people whom she saw at home paid no attention to her size. But it came to her soon after she was eighteen with the clarity of revelation. One night her mother fell on the stairway, and Midgetina tried to run for help, and to call; but her voice was too weak and her legs too small. She finally accomplished the staircase, but her mother was dead. She wept over the body, but her sobs do not seem to be of sorrow for the lovely woman dead at her feet, but of personal commiseration, humiliation and hurt vanity.

She received another blow when her father laughed aloud when she proposed to be his housekeeper, to direct the servants and order the meals. She decided to shut in her personality and to play the part of a useless doll. But her soul was too generous, her mind too clever, her clamour for knowledge and her reactions to the beauty of nature too keen to be left unrecognised and unsatisfied. She found fulfilment in daydreaming; she would sit for hours on her little chair, and imagine endless dialogues with the clouds, water, insects and stones; she had an inborn fear of fairies, never wished to see them and thought of them rarely. She was attracted by the realities of life, especially by the wonders of nature; she played the part of every character she encountered in her miniature books, especially when she could pretend to be the daughter of the sun, and an object of love and admiration.

After her father died she went as paying guest to the home of a humble, kindly woman who became her devoted friend and protector. Mrs. Bowater gets from the reader what she did not get from Midgetina, affection and appreciation. Her little boarder was avid of admiration but she did not engender

affection; people shrank from kissing or caressing her, and she did not seek to be kissed.

The perceptions of this acutely animated bit of porcelain are to the scattering observations of ordinarily large mortals what the piercing lens of a microscope is to the wandering gaze of a summer camera. And yet Miss M. reached the stars! "Night after night, when the weather was fair, or the windy clouds made mock of man's celestial patternings, I would sit in the firelight and summon these magic shiners each by name—Bellatrix, Betelgeuse, Aldebaran, and the rest. I would look at one and while so doing watch another. This not only isolated the smaller stars, but gradually I became aware that they were one and all furtively signalling to *me!* About a fortnight later my old Lyndsey friend, the Dogstar, topped the horizon fringe of woodland. I heard myself shout to him across the world. His sudden bursts of crimson betwixt his emeralds and sapphires filled me with an almost miraculous delight!"

Her reactions to herself were quite satisfying; she never felt sorry for herself, she inclined to pity the normal and she was proud of her dislike of things that seemed good to others. Her sense of smell was keenly developed, and she felt blessed by nature because she found the odour of every house repulsive. She liked none of them and marvelled at her own perspicacity. Poets may resent the accusation that such reactions are native to the poetical temperament, but countless cases may be cited to prove it.

Miss M. is always "in character," small, light, exquisitely on tiptoe to see the world, always "threading my way between trains and flounces and trouser-legs around me" whenever she meets the men and women of this world. She sometimes quivers in revolt against the tininess of her frame, but she delights in the lightness of the bond that holds her to the earth, and is repelled by and pities the grossness of the big.

When she first realised she was different, she became pro-

foundly self-conscious; at first, it hurt and she shrunk from the mere thought of going into the street. Her first journey by rail was martyrdom because of the curiosity she aroused and the remarks she heard about herself; it took her a long time to recover, and then self-consciousness took on the opposite manifestation. She knew she aroused interest and she was anxious to show herself; she would go out alone when no one was watching, always hoping she would meet some one. When she walked in a crowded street, she eyed every passerby, found pleasurable sensations in their astonishment, and felt slighted when they did not notice her. She was never shy, never sensitive of her appearance, and revelled in display of her social talent.

Profound self-consciousness is a conspicuous feature of the poetic temperament though often an index of ill-health and maladjustment. In obstinately asserting herself, Miss M. displayed the instincts of every small individual. A short man is often compared to a cock, raising himself on his spurs, trying in vain to dominate the noise of the pen. Like all tiny people she was vain. She was egocentric, making the world revolve around herself, bringing everything to her ego, and judging every event by its effect upon her. She reacted to outside incidents in proportion as they affected her life or her understanding of it, but she was strangely indifferent to the world at large, its struggles, its ideals and its sufferings. Compassion was an unknown quantity in her make-up and no experience or incident ever caused a sentiment of pity in her heart. She had an insatiate appetite for attention and she was never satisfied to hide in a corner, save when eavesdropping, too conscious of her grotesqueness to wish to be in the lime-light: "I found myself the exquisitely self-conscious centre of attention," she says in telling of a tea-party. It never occurred to her that the attention she aroused was due to curiosity and she convinced herself that her personal charm explained why so many people were "so anxious" to be introduced to her. She studied all of

them with critical eye, sensing their clumsiness and drawing from their awkward gestures a gratifying sense of self-superiority. She was obstinate and resolute, never giving way to any one, determined to carry her wishes to realisation. Reasoning with her was useless when her mind was made up, and to yield to suggestion would be to lower her in other's estimation and in her own. This is also a characteristic of Lilliputians and poets.

However, Midgetina's soul was open to the whisperings and revelations of nature. She breathed and drank of its beauties. Her contact with nature is that of a flower given wings to understand the birds, or a bird rooted to know the flowers. "My eyes dazzled in colours. The smallest of marvels of flowers and flies and beetles and pebbles, and the radiance that washed over them would fill me with a mute, pent-up rapture almost unendurable. Butterflies would settle quietly on the hot stones beside me as if to match their raiment against mine. If I proffered my hand, with quivering wings and horns they would uncoil their delicate tongues and quaff from it drops of dew or water. Solemn grass-hoppers would occasionally straddle across my palm, and with patience I made quite a friend of a harvest mouse. . . . Bees would rest there, the panniers of their thighs laden with pollen, and now and then a wasp, his mouth full of wood or meat. When sun-beetles or ants drew near they would seem to pause at my whisper, hearkening. As if in their remote silence pondering and sharing the world with me."

She was so alone in the world that she created one to suit her fancies. She had an irrepressible dislike of human beings as a race, noticeable in the way she greeted every new acquaintance; regardless of how fond of them she may become, her first words are always rude. Did she take such an attitude toward strangers in order to test herself, to prove that she was not to be trifled with, or because she enjoyed the feeling that

she could allow herself liberties that would not be granted normal individuals?

Midgetina's atmosphere and family were religious—yet her thoughts were never of religion; she was vain to show herself in the street or in a drawing-room, but she would not go to Church, she could identify herself with nature, but not with God. Lack of spirituality is rare in people doomed to ostracism because of physical handicaps, but when there is such lack they are not content to be passive pagans, they must be violently anti-religious. But they are seldom indifferent to religion for they are fundamentally emotional.

Miss M.'s mind was developed beyond her age; she liked philosophising on life, revealing strange and unexpected ideas, displaying her scant knowledge of books and writers, boasting of her intimacy with the ancient poets and quoting them for mere personal satisfaction but always quite *à propos*.

One of her interesting traits, not common enough among normal individuals, was her faculty of liberating, as it were, the souls of her acquaintances from their bodies and judging them regardless of the outside envelope; she never met any one that she did not try to represent in her mind as a midget, as a child, or as an old person, always finding her points of comparison in miniature beings, moral or physical. She never experienced jealousy or envy of other people's physical advantages, and found all the satisfaction she needed in her own vanity, when she had a new dress and could gaze and admire herself in a miniature looking-glass for hours at a time; she was careful of all her actions and had remarkable strength of character adequate to cope with any situation that arose in her life; she was capable of generous actions, as when she let Fanny take most of the money she had saved. An unusual disinterestedness, but Midgetina loved Fanny and would have given her life for her. Such love is astonishing in a being so self-centred. The strange power of Fanny, and Miss M.'s final

revolt make a penetrating study of an infatuation valuable to all who examine the actuating forces beneath mere living. Pretty, dark, pale, with all the qualities of a high-class adventuress, Fanny had the power of inspiring affection and was totally incapable of feeling it. She fascinated without blinding the clear-minded, lonely-hearted little midget, who though not insensible to her barrenness of soul could not resist the dominance of her magnetism. Her love for Fanny had nothing of Æolia in it. It was strong, clean, unselfish, clear-sighted as a deep, rock-bedded stream. She pined while Fanny was away, counting the days to her return, helping her in every way she could. Only once did she feel a physical pain on her account, and that was when she thought Fanny would marry the curate. It is not analysed and soon vanishes in the preoccupation of facilitating Fanny's correspondence with the young minister, and it is probable that her love manifestation would have taken another course, had circumstances permitted.

In the evolution of Midgetina's love for Fanny the author has given the best insight into the heroine's character, and in the inevitableness of its climax he has given the very breath of life to both Fanny and Miss M., which alone would be sufficient to prove him not only an artist but a psychologist as well. The very unreasonableness of her actions makes Fanny Bowater an extremely difficult character for an author to handle, but when we meet a live Fanny we recognise her, though we cannot account for her. Knowing her to be utterly selfish, superficial and heartless, Miss M., Mrs. Bowater, the rather stupid clergyman lover, and others permitted themselves to be used by Fanny for her own purposes and flung aside at her will, continuing to love her and to serve her.

Midgetinas are more plentiful in real life than in fiction. The kindness of fate or the wholesomeness of her early life or both had given her a dependable foundation of philosophy. She says: "One can't make a bad mistake in giving, can one? As long as I live I can't expect any great affection, any dis-

proportionate one, I mean." Still neither Miss M. nor the reader is quite prepared for Fanny's final gesture when, after having accepted loyalty, affection, service, adoration and even a share of her meagre savings, she turns on the little friend and adorer and, in words which for sheer refined cruelty are rarely surpassed in literature, denounces her by placing a base and false construction upon the very acts of devotion that have been done in her service.

Fanny construes the incense which has been burned to her as a fire from evil motives, and her creator with a few strokes of the brush paints a vivid text, so ancient yet so little heeded or understood, which Thackeray thus expressed: "The world is a looking-glass and gives back to each man the reflection of his own image." Miss M. had seen only herself in her idolatry of Fanny; Fanny, looking in the same mirror, likewise saw only herself, not Miss M. The latter's reply to Fanny's charge is: "It would take hours to answer your questions. You have only put them in your own way. They may sound true. But in your heart you know they are false. Why should you bother to hurt me? You know—you know how idiotically I loved you . . ." "My eyes shut, I sat quivering, empty of self, listening, as if lost in a fog desperately strange to me. . . . My eyes opened on a garden sucked dry of colour and reality. . . ." She accepted all without answer, without comment, and went her way without bitterness. "One by one I faced Fanny's charges in my mind. None was true, yet none was wholly false. And none was of any consequence beside the fact that she execrated the very self in me of which I could not be conscious."

The symbolism of her contact with the world and her relations with people is evident enough even though she is but a fluttering brightness caught in the net of other people's lives rather than a person freely living her own. Her contact with wealth and all that follows in its train; her momentary assumption of its glamour; her subsequent rush through it into satiety,

and out again to herself and an independent way of living were all done in an acutely conscious and analytical manner. Miss M.'s minuteness seemed to have entirely robbed her of the anæsthesia which the monotony of every-day living produces in most people.

It is "Mr. Anon," the midget by accident not by birth, who brings mystification into the book. She had prepared for his advent by long solitary walks in the country. Hence she was not astonished to see him, one day, watching her. He had been watching her for days, coming and going, and could not resist approaching her; she tried to be distant at first, but soon they chattered like old friends, although she admits that he "never called me out of myself beyond an easy and happy return, though he was to creep in my imagination as easily as a single bee creeps into the thousand-celled darkness of its hive." Two midgets, isolated and face to face in a world of grown-ups, would, according to convention, experience the same outburst of joy at meeting each other as a white man lost among wild tribes in a desert island would display at the sight of a fellow countryman. The man-midget was willing enough to understand Midgetina and he went as far as to propose marriage to her; his heart was all love for her but she rejected him harshly.

He never seemed real to her, as Fanny did, for instance; and he hardly seems more real to the reader; his personality is so blended with that of Midgetina that she absorbs him in herself, as it were. To him she imparted some of her secrets and ideas on life, but she could never give him any affection in return for all the love he bestowed upon her. If she had married him, it might have been a solution for her aimless and idle life, and no doubt like all heroines she would have been happy for ever afterward. Instead she refused and became the cynosure of London high society and the toy and pet of a fanatical old woman who lavished upon her all the luxury and the attention that Midgetina exacted, but which

she had to share with a parrot and a lap-dog. She became a real doll, spending her days in idle thoughtlessness, dressing up like a marionette, acting like a born actress and imposing her will and demands upon every one in the house. This period might have been her finish, but she was saved by books. She had an immense library at her disposal and she studied, read and improved herself. She confesses that the more she read, the more she realised her ignorance, and although this is no new experience it is unexpected to hear it from the lips of the self-satisfied, self-sufficient Miss M.

One of the most delicious touches in the book is when the tiny philosopher, in need of money, decides quite unsentimentally to capitalise the unique "talent" with which nature has equipped her and exhibit herself as a freak in a circus. She reflects: "A year ago, the very thought of exhibiting myself for filthy (or any kind of) lucre would have filled me with unspeakable shame. But what else had I been doing these long, dragging months? What had Miss M. hired herself out to be but a pot of caviare to the gourmets? Puffed up with conceit and complacency, I had been nearly feeding on the world's contempt sauced up as flattery. Nonsensical child." So, from being "parlour" exhibit at Monk's House, she met her crisis by posing in a parrot's cage in a booth and riding a prancing pony around a ring, while philosophy and humour stripped the experience of horrors.

Midgetina had all the respect of the upper middle-class for conventions; she shaped her life according to their accepted ethics and the only derogation she made from them was her attempt to go on the stage. This was due to her desire for self-display, and also because she was tired of being a useless doll; she was clamouring for liberty and she could only obtain it through work; she had no other way of earning her living and she had to endure it. She was satisfied with a simple life, and it is interesting to note the change that took place in her when she returned to old Mrs. Bowater. This good-

hearted woman was devoted to Midgetina but could never prove her love to the cold little creature who had no craving for the tenderness of a mother. Her spoiled life in London seemed to suit her fancy; during the first month, she enjoyed the luxury of her surroundings, but she soon felt how unnecessary she was to their happiness, especially after Fanny had become the latest pet of the household, and she recovered her happiness and her self-respect when she returned to her little bed-room in Wandeslore.

Midgetina was not very much occupied with morals; she had no occasion to display either regard or disregard for them; her life was too much planned for her and temptation to do wrong rarely had to be resisted. She had an instinctive dislike for ugliness and coarseness, and that alone would have kept her in the right path, if there had been any other to choose. She experienced strange prejudices toward human beings, taking a fancy to pretty persons, women in general; the only masculine friendship she appears to have enjoyed was that of Sir Walter Pollack, the compiler of the Memoirs, and this purely moral friendship was construed around their common admiration for a statue of Hypnos, the son of Night and the brother of Death.

Midgetina was a remarkable philosopher; she could hold her own and even be the leader in any conversation, and such a gift was apparent in her when she was quite a child. She wondered why things are what they are, and would inevitably find a satisfactory answer to her problems. Her mind was filled with astonishment at the world; she lost in her struggle against it.

On the whole, Midgetina's life was happy. She was surrounded with real love and affection, she was attractive and amusing, and her material needs were so little, and her income so ample to cover them, at least during most of her life, that she does not really inspire pity. And then, she is so satisfied with her lot, so secure in her position, so equal to most of

the normal people she met and so able to take care of herself, thanks to her pride, her vanity and her cold-bloodedness, that she appears normal to the reader, especially when there is no mention of her physical handicap for some pages. In reality, the reader forgets that she is a midget, but she hastens to reassure him that she has not added anything to her few inches; she seems eager that he should not forget that she has the privilege of being a midget.

One of the charming features of the study is its small particular interests: Henry, Mrs. Bowater's inky cat, "The black head split like a pomegranate as he yawned his disgust"; Miss M.'s sense of her own effect on people, as when for the first and only time she kissed a "life-sized" or "any-sized" person—Susan, "Ever so slightly the fingers constricted beneath my touch, no doubt there was a sensation of the *spidery* in my embrace"; Miss M.'s remembrance of home as she journeys away from it forever! "Could I not hear the silken rustle of the evening primrose unfolding her petals? Soon the dews would be falling on the stones where I was wont to sit in reverie beside the flowing water. It seemed indeed that my self had slipped from my body, and hovered entranced amid the thousand jargonings of its tangled lullaby. Was there, in truth, a wraith in me that could steal out; and were the invisible inhabitants in their fortresses beside my stream conscious of its presence among them, and as happy in my spectral company as I in theirs?" So far into the relations of things do these tiny particular interests lead one!

It would be interesting to read a similar book, treating of a poor midget, a midget with ideals instead of poetic fancy, with a clever mind and a sensitive heart, but obliged to earn a living. How would such an one react to environment, work, atmosphere, life and the world? Would she find fulfilment in the cries of children, in the astonishment of the crowd, in the hostility of other members of their company, in her work? Midgetina is in many ways as nearly normal as most people

and, were she not a midget, she would probably have passed unperceived by the world, a typical example of her time and her station in life. Perhaps she is that rare creature, a "perfectly normal" individual viewed through a powerful minifying glass. A mind which was always able to keep an objective interest in the world about her, a heart attuned to nature's beauty, and the courage of her convictions are the secret of Midgetina's philosophy. She does not get lost in the thicket of human motives. Narrative of them in poetic language is the charm of her Memoirs. Were I concerned with the book as a work of art, I should feel obliged to speak of the sense of bewilderment that remains with one when he has finished it, and to mention the difficulty that many have to accomplish it. To keep one's attention on it from the psychological point of view does not, however, blind me to its lyric qualities, to its symbolism, or prevent me from attempting to guess what the author intended it should signify.

A comparison of "Le Grand d'Espagne" with Mr. de la Mare's book is an interesting study. The difference in the essential character make-up of the two individual midgets throws into high relief the common bond of their deformity. Don José was typically a Spanish grandee with the turbulent blood, the impetuosity of that nation lashing into some mode of dynamic expression the brilliant intellect, the æsthetic tastes and the imperious ambition of its old aristocracy. Miss M. brought to bear on her case the inherited reticencies and habits of the cultured English woman. Different environments in childhood produced different reactions. She had a sense of humour, he was devoid of it. Don José sensed and resented his father's disappointment and humiliation in having fathered a dwarf. He resented still more his mother's treatment of him as if he were still a child, even when his tiny frame was torn asunder by man's passions. Miss M. was left to divine, as she approached maturity, that her parents' feelings towards her harboured disappointment and pity. They never expressed

it. This partly accounts for the bitterness on the one hand and the gentle philosophy on the other. Miss M. revelled in her miniatureness, Don José despised it. He contended with the lusts of the flesh, she with the lusts of the spirit. Like Oswald Alving, he sought for the sun; she wanted only the stars. Yet, the keynote of both lives was the same—the loneliness, the sense of difference from all those who were of their kind, save in stature. It drove them both into the dark.

Bitterness in Don José engendered intense egoism, which in its turn poisoned the more human qualities and left him a monster of selfishness. In his love, he thought only of himself, sacrificing Concepcion to a life of enforced isolation and abnormality; and after her death in giving birth to the twins, one of normal stature, the other a dwarf, he "had only an ephemeral and light regret for his wife, all his solicitude being occupied with the future of his son, the healthy and well-built child."

In "The Grandee of Spain" a Marquis, son of a luxurious and spendthrift Frenchman, a highly cultured young man, brought up *en prince* in a family whose "great receptions and spectacular hunting expeditions had become legendary" relates the story. On the death of his father this young man was thrown upon his own resources and the priests of the religious order who had educated him informed him that a Spanish ducal family living in the Castle of Alcantara on the mountain overlooking Toledo had requested them to find "a young man of noble descent sufficiently equipped with literary, artistic and historical knowledge to enliven the enforced idleness and to complete the education of one of the sons of the Duke." José, Count of Segovie, is an extraordinary individual of fine features, harmonious proportions, the height of a six-year-old child. An unusual intelligence animates his eyes; energy, will power, audacity, radiate from his person. Though his inches are few, every one reveals a grandee of Spain. The spirit of dominion and of power surround him like an aureole. Had

nature been just to him, he would have conquered every obstacle, but he was the living example of how nature could house "the great soul of a Cid Campeador within the diminutive proportions of a circus freak."

The author reveals the psychology of this dominant midget in the most illuminating way. He shows us the soul replete with unsatisfied desires, impotent rebellions, and in constant turmoil, like a sea agitated by perpetual storm. The grandee has a twin brother, Don Fernando, his perfect image on a normal scale. He is captain in the Spanish army, stationed in Morocco. Aside from the difference in size, there is a spiritual difference: the captain is commonplace, without intellectual distinction, lacking finesse and delicacy, a boor who calls his brother "mon petit" and who is vain, pompous and self-satisfied. His words and actions inflame the jealousy and increase the repugnance of Don José. It is the eternal antagonism of spirit and matter. In one of his discussions with M. de Baroncelle, Don José says: "What is this Divine power that can create worlds of harmony and beauty and yet find amusement in creating freaks like me? Do the contortions of my tormented soul please the Most High? Why has He extended the limits of his cruelty to the point of forbidding suicide? . . . Rare intellectual powers have been bestowed upon me so as to give me even clearer recognition of my abomination. . . . Spain is now undergoing a renaissance of her glory in Morocco and here I am condemned to be a passive and downcast spectator of it. . . . What is the pleasure of intellectual dreaming compared with the burning joy of action? My brother looks like a demi-god and has the strength of a conquistador. Had we been joined in one body we should have been one of the most perfect creations of nature. What is the irony of this mysterious power which controls the universe and takes pleasure in creating two incomplete beings?"

In the narration of the brothers' enmity several events are

portrayed in detail the purpose of which is to convince the reader of Don José's prowess despite his handicap. Thus we get a description of his contest with the fencing master; his success in riding a bucking horse that has thrown his hated brother; an encounter with peasants which reveals a quality of bravery that no one had suspected and numerous other incidents which prejudice the reader in his favour. Then Donna Concepcion, the companion of his childhood, comes on the scene. The suggested tenderness of their friendship, the revelation of their love in the scene in the garden, all have a tinge of weirdness and take us by surprise. Were it not that the transports of love transcend reason and contradict likelihood it would be unbelievable, almost inconceivable that a young woman of the physical and mental possessions of Concepcion should take the midget at his own valuation and envelop him in her sensuous love.

To avoid constant friction between the two brothers Donna Concepcion Reverte and her mother leave for a few weeks. Don José then decides to go to Madrid. This trip is used to throw further light on Don José's character, sensitiveness and obsession.

The news that the ladies Reverte have returned to Toledo causes him to hasten home that he may dispute Donna Concepcion with his brother, who has resumed his wooing. On arriving he learns that he is too late, they are already betrothed. The scene with the young lady, the analysis of her feelings, his success not only in convincing her that she has made a mistake in accepting Don Fernando, but in inducing her to elope with him, the various links of the situation bristle with difficulties. The way in which the author surmounts them and makes everything seem not only possible but plausible is an indication of his ability and facility. The hesitation of M. Baroncelle to give his aid to the elopement and the account of that event at night in the storm are rendered with a few, effective master strokes.

A villa on the hill of Fiesole becomes the nest of their unalloyed happiness during the honeymoon. It is a period of rapture in the fragrant gardens of Italy, among the pointed cypress trees of Tuscany, in a landscape bathed with golden sunshine under a canopy of pure blue. Below, in the smiling valley, Florence with her roofs and belfreys, her domes and ancient towers, browned by age and hallowed by tradition seems to doze on the banks of the winding Arno guarded by the bluish hills which arch behind in the distance. As we read these pages a sense of repose pervades our spirit and we feel lulled into a dream state like the atmosphere of bliss and oblivion that envelops the two lovers.

After this parenthesis of serenity they go to Venice. The description of the dream city as it appeared to them on the night of their arrival is alluring and satisfying. The study of the effect of happiness on Don José, and the portrayal of the young woman's mentality not yet quite emerged from the childish world where the sharp contours of reality are still concealed by imagination also display great insight and acumen.

The story of their sojourn in Venice is replete with humanity. Clouds gather on the blue sky of their happiness in the most natural way. The unavoidable, which springs from mysterious depths of human nature, from the peculiarities of the situation and from the actors' temperaments, happens. Invested with the light of Baroncelle's imagination, inflamed by his exquisite sensibility, the Pearl of the Adriatic meanwhile shimmers in colour through many pages. All the various aspects and seductive beauties of the city of the Doges are woven into a picture of beauty and magnificence that has been surpassed only by d'Annunzio. Imagination and art conjure a vision saturated with poetry, a vision which lifts us from the dead level of reality and creates the illusion that we are floating in a hazy region of dreamland, that we have accomplished an approximation of Nirvana. The dwelling of the two lovers

is in full harmony with its surroundings, and its descriptions as well as the narrative of their existence heighten the impression of dreamland. Don José could almost delude himself that he had captured the graces of Fate.

The scene of the Ephevi diving in one of the canals, Donna Concepcion's crisis of tears and her confidences to Baroncelle soon afterwards show how weak the foundation of their happiness is, and how unsurmountable and irrepressible are the need and the craving for the normal in her. We follow with increasing anxiety the steps which lead to the complete estrangement between her and Don José. The once happy ménage now houses two types of selfishness, and in his renewed unhappiness Don José feels the presence of his inimical destiny. Concepcion's regrets for having given up Don Fernando are intensified by news of his successes in Morocco which her husband has attempted to conceal from her. She is convinced that Don Fernando would have been the ideal husband and she substitutes him in her imagination. When news comes of his death she is overwhelmed and prostrated. After her recovery, she realises that her responsibilities have taken new proportions. The prospect of an heir is the cause of great anxiety and terror for both. Don José would drown his child rather than have him live through the mental tortures that he has endured. The assurance by an authority that the child will be normal,—that dwarfism has appeared in the house of Linarez only at great intervals—consoles and encourages him. They become reconciled with their parents and return to the castle of Alcantara. It is like a triumph and the account of the reception, the joy of the old Duke, the pleasurable anticipation of the new heir, the solicitousness of every one for Donna Concepcion, the preparations and anxieties of the *accouchement,* the precipitousness of twin birth, the death of the mother, the rage of Don José on seeing a baby dwarf, and his determination to abandon it are conveyed to the reader in a most natural way.

Indeed the latter incident gives an epic touch to the book but it is neither developed nor sustained, it is merely incidental; M. de la Guérinière can set himself a task worthy of a great novelist if he will write the history of the midget son which the peasant woman, sent for hastily, took away with her to the mountain.

Destiny is not yet satisfied, again it approaches its victim with a false smile. The normal twin thrives. In it, Don José sees an enlarged image of his own love-denied self in the making. He has not enough emotional depth to be touched by even a fleeting memory of the midget in the mountains. If the author had pictured him as having a spark of true humour, it would have been necessary now to picture him with some pity and regret. Instead he proceeds obsessively to fool himself again. The despair that takes possession of the ducal family when the baby falls sick and dies is described impressively. The spectacle of broken-hearted Don José making the most of his dwarf son whom his parents have brought back to the castle takes on the character of a nightmare. It is a nightmare from which Marquis Baroncelle releases us by leaving the castle and returning to Paris.

After many years Baroncelle returns to Toledo and in the last chapter he relates what he saw one evening in the cathedral. He had heard at the hotel that a priest of incomparable eloquence preached every evening at the cathedral. He goes there. The cathedral is crowded. The preacher is not in the pulpit; he is above a tribune and is completely invisible. "From his first words, I was startled for I believed I recognised the voice of Don José. It was powerful, vibrating, marvellously intoned. He carried the audience with him as a bird carries straw, in flight, with which she will build her nest. He swayed the people with the ease and amplitude of the wind in the tree, he stirred their emotions with the same facility that a musician strikes notes from the piano."

The Marquis awaits the cortege at one of the lateral doors

of the cathedral. Two priests, followed by a little acolyte carrying the book of the hours, pass out. He recognises Don José immediately, the same imperious and dominating expression which had always accomplished the miracle of increasing his infantile height almost to immeasurable proportions. He fixes him with a knowing glance, then turns away his eyes. "Had he recognised me? Without any doubt, but he would preserve his pitiless incognito as if he were dead."

Don José is a moral monster and a bully, intellectually paranoiac, somatically dwarfed, with body and mind dominated by a compulsion neurosis. He alienates the sympathy we naturally feel for every one handicapped by nature and he does not elicit from us any of that indulgence which we have in abundance for those whose passions are beyond control from mental imbalance. The reader feels no emotional kinship with him, no welling up of sadness as his misery increases. The truth is the Grandee of Spain was a genuine midget and Miss M. was an artificial one. He lacked everything save intelligence. He lacked mercy most and after that humour, that is, he lacked Midgetina's two most conspicuous possessions. He had no capacity for play or fancy; she at times seemed to have capacity for nothing else.

It would be a very blasé person who did not get diversion from either of these midgets. They elicit one's interest; they excite sympathy or contempt, admiration or dislike. The majority of readers no doubt would have liked their creators to be kinder to them in the end. But nature is not kind, it is only tolerant. While it is tolerating infractions of its laws and contempt of its principles we delude ourselves that it is indulgent, perhaps kind. "Miss M." was not a transgressor, but she was lacking a sense that is essential to her sex; and the Grandee could not purge his soul of arrogance. So they disappeared, the one to the bosom of the earth, the other to the bosom of the church, both acknowledging themselves beaten.

VI

GALLANTRY AND OUR WOMEN WRITERS

FOREIGNERS, especially Latins, often reproach American men for lack of gallantry toward women. But what the Latin calls gallantry the American calls side, artefact, veneer; moreover he believes it is engendered by insincerity and that self-advancement of some sort is its objective. However, let us admit that in a measure we merit the allegation and let us omit the discourteous retort, while protesting that we are not lacking in appreciation or praise of our women writers. One might readily infer from reading the reviews of Miss Edna Millay's "Renascence" that our vaunted land of freedom had been selected as an abode for reincarnated Sappho. Miss Millay is one of my own idols. She and Mr. de la Mare have such niches in my sanctuary that the moment any one enters, even the owner, his eye falls admiringly on them, and it tarries in appeasement. After it has been attracted elsewhere it invariably returns to them. However that does not lead me to think or say that Miss Millay is the greatest poet of modern times or to prophesy that Mr. de la Mare, two hundred years hence, will have the vogue that John Donne is now having. Moreover I am convinced that nothing would annoy either of these artists in expression more than to speak thus of them.

It is easy to enumerate Miss Millay's virtues, to define her charm, to explain her appeal, to make clear to any one our appreciation of her. But like many others of the endowed and the elect she has a besetting sin: she is careless. She is like a beautiful women who has a varied, attractive wardrobe and if one may judge from some of her appearances she knows how to wear her clothes; but she does not always take the

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY
Photograph by *Marcia Stein, New York*

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trouble to select discriminatingly or put them on properly, or at least as effectively as she might easily do. She gives the impression that she does not think it worth while. Unfortunately her last book, "The Harp-Weaver and Other Poems," discloses the fact that her sin is finding her out and it seems to me much more chivalric and gallant to say so than to throw bouquets.

Some of the little lyrics of Part I, such as "Nuit Blanche," "Feast," "Souvenirs," are fascinating; and in Part II, the poem that gives title to the book which was awarded the Pulitzer prize for poetry last year, a simple, sentimental tale of mother-love, reveals the author's mastery of the ballad. "Departure" is another bit of perfection, very Celtic in character; it might have been written by James Stephens. "Humoresque" is a cynical tragedy in two stanzas that cannot fail to move the reader.

Miss Millay reveals her carelessness in some of her sonnets. There is more form and technique in a sonnet than fourteen lines. The form she violates continually. The stress does not fall naturally on the important syllable. She gives no heed to this and the result is that one has a jumpy feeling while reading them. And it is not only in the form but in the thought that she does not do herself full justice. The thought of a sonnet should be of a high motive or endeavour. She makes it commonplace, such as "Not risen," "Not writing letters." Many of the last series of sonnets are unfortunately commonplace. "I don't know exactly what you do when a person dies" is conversation but certainly not poetic expression and quite unsuitable for sonnet form.

Such criticism should not be construed to mean that her last volume is without merit. It has great merit. Some of the poems reveal her keen zest for beauty and for life, and her ability to express it in vibrant, compelling verse. She has a good eye and a good ear; she is an admirable pagan and she has genuine passion. She finds beauty not alone in the bizarre

or exotic, but in the moulding forces of man's experience. A succinct phrase or two and your inmost thought is revealed as in "Hyacinth."

However, one cannot but realise the nostalgia that has replaced some of the joy of life that ebbs from her earlier poems.

> What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
> I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
> Under my head till morning; but the rain
> Is full of ghosts to-night, that tap and sigh
> Upon the glass and listen for reply,
> And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
> For unremembered lads that not again
> Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
> Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
> Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
> Yet knows its boughs more silent than before;
> I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
> I only know that summer sang in me
> A little while, that in me sings no more.

A similar woe goes through many of her minor poems, such as "Never May the Fruit Be Plucked":

> The Winter of life is a cellar of empty bins
> In an orchard soft with rot.

Let us hope that Miss Millay knows nothing about the winter of life save from hearsay and that when such winter comes, spring will follow in its wake with flowers of variety and profusion which she will gather and distil for us.

Miss Zona Gale is another of our young women who has been praised extravagantly and undiscriminatingly. She makes wonderful music on a violin of one string. If she could be provided with a full-string instrument, practice and experience would soon bring her to the position of first violin or concert-master in our literary orchestra. "Miss Lulu Bett" richly deserved most of the flattering things that were said of it though

it may have been exaggeration to say as one critic did: "It is without a flaw." The names of the artistic things without a flaw since the time of Benvenuto Cellini would not fill the pages of a small note book and the only one done in America was signed Abraham Lincoln!

Miss Lulu Bett was a hundred-per-cent woman, planted in semi-barren soil covered with unattractive verdure out of which arose warped, stunted, gnarled shrubs and trees bearing foliage whose characteristics made one suspicious of the presence of a skunk. The sight and the smell nearly overwhelmed Lulu, but her instinct and her "God-help-me-I-can-do-no-other" faith and her feminine fidelity brought her through successfully and we hope Mr. Neil Cornish appreciated the jewel that he found in the mud of Warbleton. It is a fine tale, is well told, and it has the epic quality essential to a great story. It is realism spiced with tenderness, sympathy and understanding.

During the war, I attended a rally at the Costanza Theatre in Rome. It was during the darkest days of 1918 and the purpose of the meeting was to boost the morale of the people. Moving pictures showing the heroism of the Allies were shown in such profusion and to such length that if one came to scoff he was ready to remain to praise. Finally the silence of the great auditorium was broken by a shout *"Bella, ma basta."* That expresses my own feeling about "Miss Lulu Bett," hence it is a disappointment to come upon the same characters, the same situations, the same display of hypocrisy and of heroism in Miss Gale's recent novel, "Faint Perfume." Leda is Lulu to the letter, and Orrin Crumb, Gideonite and commercial traveller filled with *esprit de corps,* is a "dead ringer" for Dwight Herbert Deacon, Dentist (Goldwork a specialty) and Justice of the Peace. Ina Deacon and Tweet Crumb are not only sisters under the skin, but under the calvaria; Barnaby and Cornish are as alike as two devotees of music can be and they are gaited the same way. As for Diana Deacon, Pearl

Crumb understudied her so successfully that their parents cannot distinguish them and Bobby Larkin *is* Duke Envers. The only thing new in the book is that Miss Gale has changed the insufferable Monona's sex and called the transformation Oliver, and strained Ninian through a rue de la Paix *couturière* and called him, her, it, Richmiel. The other new thing is a poinsettia lamp shade. The characters carry on, disrupt and fuse (to use a favourite word of Miss Gale) in exactly the same way in both books. Our sympathy and admiration go out for Leda just as they did for Lulu though we scarcely forgave either of them for "saving" Diana Deacon and Pearl Crumb, from Bobby and Duke. It was more than they deserved. Moreover, I am just as doubtful that Barnaby was good enough for Leda as I was that Neil deserved Lulu. As for the Dentist and the Gideonite only the distance that separated us saved them from assault.

If Miss Gale persists in playing the same tune one of her admirers suggests a variation for the next rendering: bring Ninian and Richmiel into holy wedlock and make them carry on in Richmond Hill with New York as background—and if possible resurrect R. Crumb. He was too splendid to kill. If it can be done without offence to spiritualists I should like also to meet Rev. John Perrin again. He was a duck and I should like him to go to Sicily and Crete with me and without obligation on his part save that he should impregnate me with humour and with his humanity.

Women are more venturesome than men. Adventure has more novelty for them than it has for us; perhaps it is because they have only recently been permitted to go in for it save surreptitiously that so many of them go in for it now. Adventure in literary composition is being made by many women writers. Gertrude Stein, Mrs. Jacob Wolff, Miss Fannie Hurst *et al.* In "Lummox" the latter borrows from the painter and from the musician, from the cubist and the impressionist, from the symphonist and the sonatist. She has done it with

ZONA GALE
Photograph © by *Arnold Genthe, New York*

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skill and dexterity. Reading it one recalls something of James Joyce, Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Morand; but one is sometimes reminded of Lehar or Puccini when he is listening to Wagner or some other great composer who built his works on *leit-motifs*. It is an interesting experiment and such measure of success has attended Miss Hurst's first effort that she should be encouraged to develop it.

The story is a simple one. Lummox looks like a Swede, but she is an American; she resembles Grant's tomb, but she is a woman wrung out of nobility; she is flat-footed, clumsy and elephantine, but she is kind, self-sacrificing, faithful and loves her neighbour as herself, and more than herself. She repays good for evil, pitch does not adhere to her, nor does evil association corrupt her. When the shades of age begin to fall across her path and she is in danger of stumbling, the Lord rewards her. He leads her to Meyerbogen's bakery and lunch room in City Island, and in simple, sentimental and industrious Meyerbogen and in his four motherless, mischievous children she finds her fulfilment.

The pictures that Miss Hurst makes of New York life are not agreeable. New Yorkers then were not in that age of innocence that Mrs. Wharton writes about. They are disagreeable pictures, indeed they are disgusting pictures, but I venture to say they have more verisimilitude than nine-tenths of those offered by modern fiction. One may not know the Farleys, one may never have been in Annie's sailor lodging-house, but his circle of acquaintance must be small if it does not include one of the Wallensteins, Jew and Gentile, and both the Musliners. The picture of the dance at Delsher's in 58th Street near Fifth Avenue would not have been more accurate had it been made by a movie camera.

Mrs. Oessetrich we have known for our sins. She is a type of self-sufficient Teuton that New York has always had. She is a relative of Volmer of "Undertow." They are both heartless; he is brutal, she is efficient. Her daughter Paula

does not develop a psychosis in either a typical or a legitimate way, but that is a mere detail.

Willy, the high-grade imbecile, who appeases Lummox's yearning for news of poet Farley's son after she has given him in adoption to the "big automobile mogul" from Detroit is the only artificial and inconsistent character in the book; and moreover his contact with Lummox is the one thing that reveals inconsistency in her make-up. Miss Hurst neglects Willy after he serves her useful purpose: the screen on which Lummox can hang her maternal feelings. Despite the fact that his conduct was conditioned by selfishness we should be glad to know that he did not get entangled in the meshes of predatory impulses to such an extent that the law had to be invoked. It is not the story that is the merit of "Lummox," it is the way it is told. There are women exactly like Bertha, and plenty who carry on just like Helga; there are Joe Dikes and Chitas, but their appearance and conduct are rarely described in this fashion: "Bertha could not say J. It melted in her throat. She did not know the reason, but she looked the reason, Swedishly. The great broad face. Pitched-tent cheek bones. The square teeth and flaring lips. The nose with the flanges spread like the fat haunches of a squatting idol. Eyes like globes of clear water against blue sky, but occasional darts through. Goldfish flanks. Braids of yellow hair strapped around her head in bandeaux." Another illustration of cubist painting: "It was good to set out the milk bottles. They were so there. Quarts. Bulge. Dimension." It is as massive and solid as a canvas by Picasso. Miss Hurst, furthermore, has achieved a certain mastery of contrasts: striking contrasts between highest poetic thoughts and trivial incidents: "Fancy! To be full of the invisible tears of beauty all the while she was toasting old Mr. Farley's slice of diabetic bread" and "passing through the kitchen with a breathing star in his hand." Often, she puts words of opposite meaning into such juxtaposition as startlingly to convey the idea of

FANNIE HURST
Photograph by *Albin, New York*

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reality to the eyes: "A hurting gladness," "Silences made loud by heart beats" are images that one has felt, but few have known how to express.

As a specimen of impressionistic work, let us take the description of the Lummox when she was induced to dance at the Musliners' picnic after she had drunk wisely and well: "Spinning tarantellas with broad white toe for pivot. Swaying hip rhythm, eyes slits, like wise smiling old buttonholes. Hands broad on haunches and little bulge of bacchanalian belly—Yeow—squat heels deep in turf, arms flung wide and half wrenched from sockets! Leg out from under. Yeow—up again on toe pivot—spin—spin—laughter over wild moors—sweat in hovels—hot male hands on square-hipped girls—scratch of mustachios against laughing, square-teethed women—crones with the soil ground into their wrinkles. Sing, peasant, sing, and swing the grinning scythe! Sing of the strong fertilising soil and the dung heaps that steam and the crones that are wise with old lore and the women who love, and who bear, and who weep, and the wide-legged men with the necks like tree holes. Sing—Yeow—of meat and of soil and of strength and of love—sing Yeow! Yeow! Yeow!"

Miss Hurst is a fiction architect who has designed and constructed a building not so attractive in appearance as many of those built by her competitors, but with some features that make it more acceptable to tenants; it is adapted to present-day needs, and to personalities.

Another woman writer who has done "something different" and who merits our gratitude is Miss Ethel M. Kelley. She knows something about mankind and a tithe of it she revealed in "Heart's Blood." She has woven a web of motives that finally get twisted into a rope with which the heroine hangs herself, but the poor soul could have used it as well for a fire escape had she been born with less fidelity and single-heartedness. Any one will admit that he has known a Lila who is as responsive to the call of her lust as a well-trained dog is to

his master's voice, and nearly every family tree bears a David, blind, blundering, bradypod who tramped on a pearl believing it a bit of Cape Cod oyster shell, and who should have been fed on sheep thyroids from infancy. Daisys and Jimmies we have always with us. They do not make much noise in the world though movie pictures feature them. The gems of the book are the two G's: Gwennie and grandmother. Some of her sex may deny her but Gwennie nevertheless is a real woman. She is monogamous, she is faithful, she is self-sacrificing, and she prefers eternal death to eternal mockery. Margaret of France said, "The defect of woman is timidity," and it has been universally held they are born to fear. Gwennie is not timid; when she finds herself, without seeking, in love with a married man she neither denies it nor makes great effort to conceal it. She lends herself with too much willingness to Lila and spends too much time baiting her trap, but one of the cleverest things in the book is the episode of the substitution of Gwennie for Lila in David's bed. It is done with the dexterity of a *prestidigitateur*. Boccaccio was heavy-handed compared with Miss Kelley.

When the time came that Gwennie could admit and publish her love without injury to any one save herself she told it to him who had

"The emptiness of ages in his face,"

and it made the same impression as if she had told it to his brother the ox. Then she recalled the wish of Euripides: "Not to be born is the best, and the next to die as soon as possible." "I could have lived with David married to Lila, or even not married to anybody—or married if I could have believed it was right for him. He is like the flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone, and the blood of my heart. I don't see how it can be like that, and have him not know, but he doesn't even like me now. I couldn't go on living that way even if

ETHEL M. KELLEY

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I wanted to. Of course, I love him enough to die for him, but I can't even do that. I'm just dying for myself."

Happily grandmother understood Gwennie and sympathised with her. She had a great teacher, experience, and she had lived a long life of regret that she had not followed her instinct and intuition.

The time is coming when women will be encouraged to do both. When it comes, instinct and intuition will be called judgment, and they will be praised for a possession which some contend they now lack but which Miss Kelley convinces me they already possess.

The country that produces "Heart's Blood" has at least one great novelist.

Miss Willa Cather, who many think is writing fiction that will endure, treats the same subject in her last book, "A Lost Lady." Niel Herbert was not so overwhelmingly in love with Mrs. Forrester as Gwennie was with David and he was timid and cautious. He was willing to make great sacrifice of time and strength to testify his devotion: but he was not willing to tell her of his love. Moreover he wanted to keep her feet in the paths of virtue from which they had learned to stray early in life. Had Niel been less tender-minded, more virile, it would have been interesting to see what effect his devotion would have had upon Mrs. Forrester. But to accomplish it Miss Cather would have had to give him more years. The way of a man with a maid is still one of the inexplicable things, but the way of a woman with a boy offers no difficulty of explanation. He is reduced to a condition of inertness by fear, when she is present, and to supineness by timidity when she is absent.

Niel is, however, a secondary character in this interesting picture of life in the Middle West a generation ago. Marian Ormsby, an extraordinary admixture of virtue and infirmity, plays the leading rôle.

The story is told in a natural and fascinating way: the house and the housewife that testify the coming true of a

pioneer's dream, the group of little boys hurrying to play and to picnic, the advent of the moral imbecile, Ivy Peters, with the key to his character in his hand, a metal slingshot with which he stunned the woodpecker and then gouged out its eyes that he might enjoy its pain and discomfiture fighting life, handicapped; Niel's first reward of virtue which revealed the kindliness and loveliness of Mrs. Forrester and his budding protective instinct are presented in a few pages. The reader breathes a familiar atmosphere. He senses the comfort and welcome of the Forrester home; he likes the head of the house and he loves his wife; and he continues to love her when he finds she is an adulteress—even when he learns she is a drunkard. Indeed, she does not forfeit his affection when he learns she is the accomplice of Poison Ivy Peters, now a lawyer, and has put a dent in Judge Pommeroy's shield of good will toward men. When he learns that the burdens of her declining days have been lightened by the fortune of a rich, cranky old Englishman living in Buenos Aires, he loves her and applauds her. Naturally he asks, how did she accomplish it? The answer is simple enough: by her charm and her character.

Mrs. Forrester could have broken any or all the commandments and "got away with it." Pulchritude and charm together will bowl over the majority of men, and no one can withstand them if character, honesty, fidelity, generosity, self-sacrifice, are blended with them.

Miss Cather has created an irresistible woman. We should have uttered that phrase which the foreigner maintains comes automatically from our vocal apparatus on taking leave of a new acquaintance: "I am delighted to have met you," had we dropped off a Burlington train at Sweet Water and gone up to that house well known from Omaha to Denver. I am sorry she thrust alcoholism upon Marian Forrester. Persistent consumption of alcohol by a woman disintegrates her personality in a typical and inevitable way; though my admiration for Miss Cather as an artist and practical psychologist goes back

WILLA CATHER

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nearly a quarter of a century to the reading of her little story called "Paul's Case," it is difficult for me to believe that Mrs. Forrester was the exception to the rule.

And I do not quite make out the Blum boys who "lived on wienies to home" and especially Adolph to whom "not much ever happened but weather," but who was witness of a love scene that never had more restrained or more comprehensive description—if atmosphere can be called description. Mrs. Forrester "had always treated him like a human being," hence her secrets were safe. It is not enough: "She bought game of him in the closed season, and didn't give him away." Thieves' honour; but it was not necessary to Miss Cather's charming story.

I hope Miss Cather has not lost track of Niel Herbert. I should like to see her shape his career away from the Y. M. C. A. or the Knights of Columbus. Any boy of nineteen in the presence of a woman of charm and strong femininity who could think of her so impersonally and altruistically as he did must have had something wrong with his sap channels. "It was as Captain Forrester's wife that she most interested Niel, and it was in her relation to her husband that he most admired her. Given her other charming attributes, her comprehension of a man like the railroad-builder, her loyalty to him, stamped her more than anything else. His admiration of Mrs. Forrester went back to that, just as, he felt, she herself went back to it. He rather liked the stories, even the spiteful ones, about the gay life she led in Colorado, and the young men she kept dangling about her every winter. He sometimes thought of the life she might have been living ever since he had known her,—and the one she had chosen to live. From that disparity, he believed, came the subtlest thrill of her fascination."

Some boy! I have a curiosity to see the tree of his life in bloom and in fruit. Miss Cather has the imagination, the experience and the skill to depict it. If she can make it as fascinating as "A Lost Lady," I shall sing her praises all my days.

VII

NATURE VERSUS ART IN RECENT FRENCH NOVELS

THE casual, cursory reader of French modern fictional literature often concludes that it is in a decadent state; that it lacks spontaneity, originality, vitality; that it has threshed the grain of sex so frequently and so thoroughly that not only has all the seed been removed but the straw spoiled as well. In fact such a reader feels that the dominant interest of French novelists is the portrayal of the creative urge beyond its possessor's control, a study of their countrymen's temperamental weaknesses, and the vaunt of their various good fortunes. This conclusion is founded on reading "realistic" novels, with which Zola planned to give the *coup de grâce* to the "romantic" novel. Realism ran wild in France for about thirty years, then it had a stationary period of another generation and now it is on the wane. It might have lasted longer had it not had such bizarre birth and prodigious infantile growth, for it procreated Flaubert, de Maupassant, Baudelaire and Zola before it had cast its swaddling clothes. The tree that flowers riotously while still young is not one that bears dependable fruit year after year. After these four big literary apples, the "realistic" literary tree in France bore sour fruit for many years. But the literary horticulturists did not abandon the tree nor did the reading public fail to ask for its apples. Meanwhile they planted other trees which are now beginning to bear. The fruit is not so "tasty," but it is more substantial, and we shall be told no doubt that it is better for us. The French people like to display elegant transitions in their literary movement as they display their best manners when they feel a critical eye upon them. In fact, the realistic school is by no means out of fashion in literature, for to-day

Flaubert is enjoying a vogue not confined to dictators and followers of fashion, but one which is fairly universal in the reading circles of France. His position on the stellar chart of literature will orient venturesome writers and attract experienced readers for many a year. He has taken as definite a place in the firmament as Dostoievsky. Sky-gazers may watch Zola and Maupassant get dimmer and dimmer, overshadowed by new stars rising for recognition, but one may safely say that when they have lost their lustre Flaubert will be shining brilliantly.

French people feel the need of going to extremes in most of their secondary impulses. This accounts for the sudden *volte-face* of literature and for the diametrically opposed aims of the two schools; from the purest romanticism, they changed to the most cynical realism; from naturalism they turned their ambitions to the earth, the soil, the land, the fields, the patriarchal heirlooms that they cherish with as much outward demonstration and much more real love than their mistresses. The country's literary prophets foresaw a period of war literature immediately after the armistice, and they were not to be disappointed, although their success has been mediocre despite numerous books, novels, chronicles, memoirs and diaries that aimed to throw light on the psychology, physiology or daily events of the War. Yet the reluctance to read war literature which French people have displayed, save in relatively few instances when the books were especially well documented, is easy to understand. They are trying to forget five years of chaotic existence. Future generations may find both interest and enlightenment in reading the war books French people now despise, knowing that no written description can attain the realities they witnessed.

During that period of transition which we are still living, but which was rushed by the war, a new school was born. New is scarcely the word to apply to it, for it has never ceased to live since the time of Virgil, but it has been given a new life

and is obtaining belated, deserved recognition. The school is that of Nature; love for the soil, for the forests, for the fields, for the red brick house or thatched-roof farm that shelters the backbone of the French nation. French people have a reputation for being engrossed in love intrigues, their men are seldom fully trusted as husbands and not all of their women would be awarded a "prix de vertu" by fiction readers on both sides of the hemisphere. However, cultured Frenchmen are not interested in novels that deal exclusively with sex divagations and in which they can find no food for that inner craving that calls for more idealism and more beauty. Some would say that French people do not desire or need to read of love adventures because they have always a better one to tell, from personal experience. That may be, but at least they must be given credit for not telling it.

The novels that have been published by lovers of nature, born in the midst of it and impregnated by its charm, have been written by those who have learned their alphabets and their four rules of arithmetic in the little country school where it is an honour for the pupil to cut the wood on cold winter mornings and start the fire in the iron stove which heats the class-room. These novels are fascinating, redolent of the odour of the wood and full of the charm of the country. To read them is to find the spring of a brook in which parched lips may quench their thirst, after a long tramp in a country rich and fertile. The reader of these novels will find the same voluptuousness as the traveller who, taking a train from Paris for Blois, gazes out of the window on the miles of corn-fields of the Beauce region, flat and monotonous, yet one of the richest of the country—and who suddenly sees the river below the vaporous sky, its picturesque banks, the graceful curves of the hills, the green pastures and refreshing landscapes of Sologne.

Alphonse de Chateaubriant is at the head of the masters of this modernised school of idealism and to him should go the re-

spect and the admiration of the reading public. His talent is undeniable and imposes itself on the most refractory minds. Where it does not appeal, it interests, arrests the attention and makes an impression on the mind, regardless of the feelings.

M. de Chateaubriant is a typical example of the "hobereau," what English people call a gentleman farmer—and Americans a country gentleman. He was brought up outside of literary circles, and represents old, refined France. Recently a fellow-writer has said of him: "His manners are as simple as they are charming; he is impulsive to a fault, opening up the most treasuredly guarded regions of his personality at times, and hiding them to the eyes at other times, guided only by his instinct and sensitiveness. He loves solitude, but at the same time feels an occasional and irresistible need of Paris, and he mingles there with other men, refreshing his mind in an atmosphere of art and thought." In reality, the best topical, local writers are those who have a thorough knowledge of the world at large, a broad perspective and a profound understanding of human reactions. The novelist whose life is spent exclusively in the country, among peasants, does not know where humanity starts. He gives too many details that destroy the *ensemble,* and he is not a fair judge of the characteristic features of the region; his sentiments, deep as they may be, disappear under the confused descriptions of picturesque customs. Nearly all "peasant" novelists are powerless to render the poetry of the land and to give the reader the sensation and the materiality of it. Observation and knowledge are not sufficient; it requires great gifts and a rare receptive disposition. It is with his senses as well as with his imagination that the true poet of nature vibrates. Alphonse de Chateaubriant has all the qualities of the true poet. He appears, at first, like the combination of poet and artist, of excessive sensitiveness. He admits that he is the prey of real delirium when he smells the odour of a chestnut-tree, but his intelligence plays a preponderating part when he expresses his delirium in verse or in

prose; intelligence controls his sensitiveness and imposes a strict discipline upon his sentiments, which is the test of a true writer.

Twelve years ago, when M. de Chateaubriant appeared on the literary horizon of France, his name was quite unknown. The sound of it suggested the "great" Chateaubriand and it recalled his accomplishments. Would the newcomer parallel those? He fulfilled his moral obligation with the thoroughness and the conscientiousness of his nature, and "Monsieur des Lourdines" was awarded the Goucourt prize in 1911.

"Monsieur des Lourdines" is not a masterpiece. It is more attractive than a masterpiece, it is simple, it is beautiful and it is true. The hero of the novel is a typical country gentleman of the Poitou whose life, like that of almost every landowner of the better class in France, is colourless, devoted to the soil, the farmers, the Church and the ancestral home. They look upon life at large with coloured spectacles which take a danger-warning red colour when they are focussed on Paris—a vague Paris, where they would not risk themselves and where the inhabitants have no *patrie*. M. des Lourdines is no exception. For him, Paris is a dangerous city, the indirect and unsuspecting cause of his melancholy, of his wife's semi-paralysis and of their common solitude and unhappiness. Anthime, their son, spoiled and misled, but not fundamentally bad, was attracted to "the City" after he left college and there amidst pleasures of which his father has no idea, leads a life that only people from the provinces and foreigners dare lead. He ruins himself, wrecks his father's household and life and causes his mother's death.

M. des Lourdines appears to the reader in the opening chapter of the book, a retiring and shut-in character, whose love for the soil is comparable to his timidity for his wife, an indolent, sick, and heart-broken old lady whose wishes are orders and whose desires are needs.

Des Lourdines' avenue of expression is through his violin.

To it he confides his few joys and his numerous sorrows; he locks himself up at night, in a remote wing of the old château, and there gives vent to his emotions, and thinks of former days of happiness and later days of sorrow. There is a strange soul-communion between him and Nature. Autumn is his favourite season; he spends every afternoon of September watching it come and feels every breath of it; he loves trees: they are his friends, his children, his love; he nurses a wounded tree as a mother nurses a sick infant and his dog Lirot is trained by his master to hunt mushrooms and to leave hares and birds alone. His love for trees suffers a great shock when he has to witness the uprooting and cutting down of a beautiful elm that prevented the daylight from entering the bedroom of his wife. Each stroke of the axe finds an echo in his heart and he responds to the sacrifice of the tree with all the powers of his being. M. des Lourdines enjoys the love and respect of the peasants; down in his heart, although he is the "master," he envies them their care-free and happy lives; his entire life is wound around the soil, the forests, the farms and the fields—they are his happiness—and the remembrances of Anthime as a child and, later, of his escapades—they are his agony, his disgrace and his constant torment.

Anthime was banished from the conversations of the des Lourdines, but not from their dreams; they still hoped he would repent and come back to the ancestral home to continue its traditions and contribute to its immortality.

One evening Monsieur comes home and learns, from a letter received from a Paris pawnbroker, that his son had borrowed large sums of money and failed to repay them. M. des Lourdines is shocked and heart-broken, but sees clearly that he has to shoulder the matter, and keep his wife in ignorance of the new misfortune. He goes to the neighbouring town the next morning, after leaving a note for his wife, which gives him an excuse for his absence—the first lie he had ever told her.

His visit to the town, his fruitless efforts at the lawyer's

and at the counsellor's to obtain some hope, encouragement or solution of his problem; the racing through the country where he finds again the invigorating atmosphere that will help him bear the years of poverty that will be his after his son's debts are paid—for there is no doubt in his mind but that they should be paid to the last cent—all these are recorded with powerful veracity and emotion. M. des Lourdines feels that he is responsible for his son's behaviour and that idea works fast in his mind; he wants to compensate for the way in which he spoiled Anthime in his childhood. It is surprising that the author did not back up his argument and make M. des Lourdines' obligation still greater by bringing in the necessity of keeping the family name in all its chivalric purity; a mind such as his and his respect for traditions would naturally impress him with that necessity.

His farms are sold, his ancestral heritage is lost, his fortune is gone, but still his wife, although suspecting that something is wrong, does not know. However, she has to be told, not the truth about Anthime, but that their circumstances are reduced and, in a long cry of agony, she divines it, feels that Anthime is the only one responsible and she sobs his name and drops on the floor. Her agony lasts several weeks—Anthime does not come home while she is conscious, but arrives in time to receive her last breath and her last look of love.

Prompted by some invisible and inexplicable power, M. des Lourdines inflicts upon Anthime the gruesome task of carrying the body of his mother downstairs where she will be exposed to the respect of the villagers, and the horrible task weighs heavily on the mind of both father and son. Days pass, Anthime becomes restless, he wants to go back to his life of pleasure, but finds it difficult to tell his father, who has taken to his bed and refuses to speak to any one. One day he gets up and takes Anthime through the fields in which he was wont to dream, to love Nature and to understand it. Anthime is refractory to that understanding, but humours his father, until

the truth, all save the cause of his mother's death, is revealed to him by a strong, powerful, resentful, angry and reproachful father. Anthime cries, begs to be pardoned, but finds his father unresponsive and decides to kill himself. And to accomplish it he goes that night into a remote wing of the château. He hears a strange melody; he listens, hidden behind a staircase, and from there he sees his father, transfigured, happy, sweet and tearful, playing upon his cherished violin. Anthime listens; the beauty of his father's art penetrates him, it leads to thought and to tears. He returns the next night. Then his father, who has a few kind words for his son during the day, feels comforted and hopeful; he plays old nursery rhymes with which he used to rock Anthime to sleep; then he plays religious hymns that the scapegrace has not heard since his flight to Paris. They have a new charm for him and, with love, through harmony, understanding of his father comes; his father is not a man, he is a saint, an angel of purity and holiness. Anthime's mind is made up; he will stay with his father, he will at last be the son that he should never have ceased to be and, years later, far into the forest, two figures are seen, walking side by side and the casual observer cannot detect which is the older—they are both old men.

The beauty of the novel lies in its rich and melodious language; to speak of nature, M. de Chateaubriant finds the words that some lovers find for their sweethearts; the ties of blood and nature are the frame upon which the novel is constructed; for the pleasure of the reader and for his own, for M. de Chateaubriant is fond of music and needs it to visualise his novels while they are maturing in his mind, he has added a new and original charm to his hero, and M. des Lourdines' love for his violin completes the triangle of his life: fear and consideration of his wife, love for nature and communion with it through the strings of his violin.

It is a new application of an old principle: to reinvoke by music the memories and determinations that should be our

ethical signposts, to make them not only legible but to cause the legends on them to stand out lustrously so that even one partially blinded from long gazing at the dazzling lights of Paris could read them and thus find his way to salvation.

"Monsieur des Lourdines" paved the way for a number of novels and poems that show the tendency writers have to return to the soil; but M. de Chateaubriant is not a prolific author; he has been one of the lights that guided the way, but when he had thus fulfilled himself, he did not hurry to add a new glory to his literary fame, and twelve years passed, the world was in a chaos, the map of Europe was altered several times, and the author of "Monsieur des Lourdines" was still silent, apparently unaware of the hopes raised by his first novel. So many new writers had become famous in that length of time that M. de Chateaubriant was forgotten—buried in his ivory tower; forgotten but not idle. He had not been spoiled by his first success. He had the honour and the good sense not to take undue advantage of it to flood the market with numerous novels, banking his future success on the precedent one. He went to war, he fought and suffered and he learned a difficult lesson of endurance. Back in his manor in Brittany he wrote "La Brière." His writing faculties are not brilliant, writing is a task for M. de Chateaubriant, and perseverance and hard work play a large part in his work. But then, the result! "La Brière" is a masterpiece; there is no flaw of composition; the characters are understood by a master, the sentiment of the book is comprehension, and the descriptions of the soil, the earth, the dirt, the peat-hole and the lagoons are admirable. "La Brière" is among the best novels that France has produced in the present generation.

It is a picture of life, sombre and melancholy, in the remotest part of Brittany, in a region untouched by progress, populated by a people harsh and poor who live as their ancestors lived; a people attached to their soil, absorbed in their occupations, slaves of tradition, imbued with prejudice, divided

in clans and dominated by strong parochial spirit. The Briérons are what their heredity and their environments have made them.

The Brière, neither land nor water, is an immense lagoon near the mouth of the Loire, expanding north into Brittany, a sort of inland lake of shallow waters. Here, where the world seems thousands of miles away, the Briéron feels at home as nowhere else. He loves his peat bog; he looks upon all strangers with suspicion. He fears and resents outside interference. He feels he owns his country—every blade of grass, every pool, every bush, every pound of peat and his ownership is recognised by an ancient charter their "good Duchess" signed one day when she took pity on their poverty.

With human material like the Briérons and an environment such as the Brière, only the most primitive and crude passional elements can be woven into the fabrics of fiction. M. de Chateaubriant has made the most of his material; he has lived with them, as one of them, and each of his observations was taken *sur le vif*. The spirit of prejudice, egotism, love, hatred, fear, revenge and superstition permeate every scene of the story which is likely to take as permanent a place in French literature as "Lorna Doone" in English.

Its characters are too primitive to possess self-restraint, that child of education which lessens much of the friction in life. They are caught in that maelstrom of Fate which every man carries within him and which wears the features of the possessor's weakness.

The Brière is revealed to us as seen by Aoustin who, in his sail-boat, is returning from the annual trip to Nantes to sell peat. He is a vigorous old man, stubborn, autocratic, harsh, cruel and bestial, the terror of his old wife and his beautiful daughter, Théotiste. He has driven away his son, because of his marriage to a "foreigner," a girl who was not a Briéron and consequently most unwelcome. Théotiste also has a lover, Jeanin, who is not a Fédrun, not a real Briéron from the

islands. He is from Mayun, a Briéron of the coast at the outskirts of the marshes, whose inhabitants are universally ridiculed. Aoustin will not have his girl marry a man from Mayun, not even the best—and this is the dramatic foundation of the story, of which many scenes have the movement of tragedy. The whole population of the Brière is involved in its display after the fashion of a mighty Greek chorus. The country itself sings through its pages—its peat, its soil, its sky, its waters, its winds, its mists, its fowls of the air and its life in the water are ever present. Nature breathes through it all, and it has unique personality. It is represented in its varying moods and aspects, dependent on the weather, the hour of the day, and the change of the seasons. From its magic garment is patterned a series of pictures of bewildering fascination, each serving as a background for the principal action. They impart to each scene that breath of mysterious poetry which is the vivifying spirit of every true work of art.

The peace of the Brière is in danger. A sword of Damocles is hanging over the region and a sense of uncertainty is beginning to seize the Briérons. The twentieth century progress is knocking at their door. The money powers, backed by the central government, are plotting to lay hold of the Brière to industrialise and exploit it. At least such is the rumour. Louis XVI had reconfirmed their rights to enjoy the Brière exclusively and independently and, although the original Charter had been lost in the fire of 1820 Aoustin decides to search every house in the Brière for a copy of it. He realised it would enhance his importance and his authority to find it. This search for the documents constitutes the human part of the novel; while he goes from door to door, the reader is more than ever impressed with the nostalgic beauty of the country; it is neither attractive nor picturesque; it is deep, sombre, dark and dreary, but, for Aoustin, it is paradise and to keep it he will fight to his last drop of blood. He considers the watery waste through which he roams to be his kingdom; he

explores its most secluded spots, gliding with his boat amid the thick jungle of tall water reeds which seem to sink their roots into the mirrored clouds of an inverted firmament. Consciousness of newly recovered freedom and confidence in the outcome of his quest fill his mind with cheerful thoughts. At times, he seizes his trident and plunging it with a quick blow into the muddy bottom he tries his luck with the fat eels which taste so sweet to the Briéron palate. This diversion does not lessen his vigilance. His suspicious eye is always on the alert for lawbreakers.

The tragedy comes with a rush. Théotiste confesses to her father that she is going to be a mother, and the portrayal of her fears as she whispers her secret are impressive and heartrending. Aoustin feels a crushing sense of defeat and this is the subject of careful analysis which, with other contrasting incidents, makes his figure stand out even more as a living reality. The tragic impression does not last long—Aoustin through the first act of kindness of his life finds the famous documents and the world becomes a valley of joy for him. It does not last long though because, soon after the excitement has died out a little, he is carried home after having received a shot that puts his life in danger.

Misfortune soon overtakes Aoustin; his daughter, accused of infanticide, is put in prison and he loses his job as overseer of the Brière. Jeanin is the source of all his bad luck. Before killing him, he must take Théotiste, who has become insane, to the asylum. She dies *en route*. In the presence of disaster and death Aoustin forgives Jeanin.

Like the Odyssey "La Brière" is built around perilous navigation. Aoustin on his sail-boat is Ulysses wandering on the sea; he is Æneas searching the Roman banks; and the love drama and its hectic development have a vague similarity to Shakespeare's tragedies.

M. de Chateaubriant approaches literary composition from the standpoint of the painter. He first visualises that which he

will accomplish, then he studies the material he proposes to use: canvas and pigment. The first is a labour of love, the second a love of labour. After he has shaped his characters according to the method of painters and sculptors, he endows them spiritually. This is what he has called the music period, when the work vibrates in his mind under the emotion created by music. When this occurs he knows he has reached the stage in which musical rhythms meet the rhythms of creative life. When the painter has perceived the image and the musician has given life to it, the writer starts his real work. From that moment it is a period of joy and happiness for the work has then become so completely perfected in the mind of the author that it writes itself.

In "La Brière" the entire action seems to be founded in fact; every detail real, and witnessed by the author. M. de Chateaubriant has done a work of art in composition and allotment. In his handling of scenic detail and in exposition of psychological analysis, he rivals Flaubert. By leaning his ear to secret places, he has gained the voice of nature and has heard the symphony of its creation. By his knowledge of the frailties of human nature, of the dominion of the passions, of the soul stultification of medievalism, of the spiritual involution caused by environment, he has shown himself a profound student of behaviour and a masterly interpreter of its display.

"La Brière" was awarded the "Grand Prix du Roman." Casual readers may fear that soon there will be more prizes than novelists in France. There is no real foundation for such a fear. Literary prizes in France at the present day are largely publicity propaganda. There are the official prizes, but they are few in number compared with those established by enterprising publishers and limelight loving individuals. The "Grand Prix du Roman" of the Académie Française, however, is another matter. It is seriously sought and highly

valued. It gives "character" to a novel and the majority of the books to which it has been awarded ornament literature.

M. de Chateaubriant is not the only one whose "back to nature" literary efforts have been officially recognised. Jean Balde, last year, was awarded the Femina and the Northcliffe Prizes for "La Vigne et la Maison." It is an interesting novel, in which the reader forgets the lead-grey sky of the Brière and fills his soul and mind with the sunny beauty of the Bordeaux country. The vineyards with their rich grapes, the Gironde with its picturesque banks, the green meadows and the fat cattle give an atmosphere of peace and joy to the book which is scarcely disturbed by the personal tragedy of the life of Paule who, for love of her farm and of her village, is not tempted to live in the city, but fights with all her power and her knowledge to maintain the prosperity of the ancestral domain. Jean Balde feels so profoundly the beauty of her province that her descriptions are harmonious with its realities. Readers who know the country around Bordeaux will recognise it in "La Vigne et la Maison" and those who do not know it will close the book with the feeling that they have been there and have loved it as much as the author does. She is also a painter of characters and displays her humour and her human understanding when she plays with the personality of the old *commère,* "Comtesse Rose," the fatalistic, trouble-ridden and easy-going pedler of quick wit and sympathetic heart whose tongue was always ready to make a witty remark or repeat the latest village-gossip. The silhouette of Mademoiselle Dumont, the sex-starved, shrunken and illusioned piano teacher, is as true to life as that of Louisa, the despotic, trouble-making cook. Paule, the heroine, stands out as a living model and to her will go the sympathy and interest of the reader. Jean Balde is as much at ease when she exalts her love for "Les Tilleuls," the charm the soil holds for her and the moral impossibility of her leaving it, as when she describes

the society life of the rich Bordeaux families, the aristocracy of the bourgeoisie, who have more awe and respect for an old name seen in gilded letters above the entrance door of a business house, than for titles and genealogic trees. Their manners have all the stiffness and lack of spontaneity that reveal their plebeian origin to the true "blue-blooded" Frenchman. But the spirit of the book is wound around the vineyards and the house—both are firmly niched in the heart of their owner. To them she sacrificed the love, the liberty and the romance she was entitled to expect of life.

Such books are islands in the sex stream of literature where one may land and get food and drink. After such refreshment he may push off his boat and read "Fille d'Ouessant," "Le Diable au Corps," "Le Grand Ecart" and countless others where sex-divagations and instincts are twisted, uprooted, exposed, interpreted and misinterpreted. "La Vigne et la Maison" is freed from such thoughts and is not puerile. It is such a diversion from the beaten path of modern writers, so uplifting and soul-refreshing that the reader takes on a different attitude in regard to life after he has received its salutary and much-needed influence.

"La Survivante" is no departure from Jean Balde's determination to weave love of the Bordeaux soil into the life of her heroine. Elisabeth's consolation after she has endeavoured to do justice to her husband's talent as a painter is to return to that soil. Georges has been killed in the war, and the posthumous exhibition made in Paris by his widow, really prompted by Lucien, a college friend of Georges who had always been in love with Elisabeth, although a success from the material point of view, has given a shock to the pretty young woman who has found that it was largely due to her personality.

Elisabeth will not accept Lucien's love and will return home to the country that she loves and where she will remain forever faithful to the memory of her husband whose love for

her she is justified in doubting. Jean Balde had a beautiful subject; she could have made more of it by analysing Lucien's make-up and the struggle that took place in his soul between loyalty to Georges and love for Elisabeth; as it is, she has been so engrossed by the latter's problem that Lucien is shadowy and incomprehensible. Jean Balde is not so good a psychologist as an observer of nature, and the reader feels a constant restraint and uneasiness when she turns her eyes away from the Gironde; he wishes her to return to it, and help him explore the charm of that region. "La Survivante" is a dignified and courageous novel, as restful in its great lines as it is disturbing and captivating in its details.

VIII

FOOTPRINTS ON THE LITERARY SANDS OF TIME

FORTY years ago J. K. Huysmans caused a sensation in the literary world by the publication of "A Rebours." He had been attempting the ladder of fame for ten years; by the creation of des Esseintes, a decadent, aristocratic, æsthetic poseur and his milieu, he went at once nearly to the top round.

In 1884 Comte Robert de Montesquiou was twenty-nine years old. He had written a small book of verse in the manner of the Decadence, and was convinced that he was a poet of the first flight. Moreover, he was determined to convince others. He had transformed the top floor of his father's house in the Quai d'Orsay into a masterpiece of the decorator's art and made it a mecca for the curious and the connoisseur. From that time, his most successful efforts at self-expression and fulfilment were verse writing and interior decoration. Disdain of others' accomplishments, contempt of others' possessions, insensitiveness to others' feelings, were his habitual manner.

Mallarmé told Huysmans about de Montesquiou's apartment and its creator. On this narrative Huysmans based des Esseintes and his environment. Montesquiou reproached Huysmans that he had patterned a character without seeing the original; moreover that des Esseintes was a caricature, not a portrait, and that both his behaviour and ethics were foreign to him.

When Edmond Rostand wrote "Chantecler," which is far from being the best piece of his long career—long by deeds, not by years—it was revealed to Montesquiou that the unbearable and arrogant peacock was patterned after him. What

shocked him most was not that the peacock was ridiculous but that it was despicable. He never forgave the author for it. He knew it was from some caricatures he had written, in which he showed little indulgence toward Rostand and his surroundings, that the latter got his inspiration. To avenge himself Montesquiou studied and reviewed freely all of Rostand's plays. This study was published under the name of "The Meteor."

Two years ago, and shortly before the death of Robert de Montesquiou, Marcel Proust published "Le Côté de Guermantes." In the latter part of that volume which contains the beginning of his "Sodome et Gomorrhe," the first chapter was entitled: "The first appearance of men-women, descendants of those inhabitants of Sodome who were spared by the Heavenly fire." M. de Charlus is the man-woman: nature's riddle. It was said by those who profess to know that M. de Charlus was patterned after Robert de Montesquiou. Marcel Proust was at much pains to state that his characters were composite and it is possible he blended some one else with de Montesquiou to form M. de Charlus, his most minutely analysed creation, next to Swann, and the hero of the series "A La Recherche du Temps Perdu."

Robert de Montesquiou's memoirs have recently been published. They are entitled "Les Pas Effacés"; there is nothing in these three volumes that can be construed as an admission on the part of their author that he was M. de Charlus. However, as the literary world is likely to assume that he was, "Les Pas Effacés" should be an important document for the study of the temperament, character and intellectuality of the so-called third sex.

It is regrettable that Montesquiou did not "sit" to Rémy de Gourmont. Had de Gourmont attempted, by an analysis that knew no scruples, to reveal M. de Montesquiou as he revealed the virgin heart, in the novel of that name, we should have had a physiological interpretation which, in conjunction with

the psychological one of Proust, might have presented the real de Montesquiou.

Robert de Montesquiou, descendant of Marshall Montluc, a famous soldier of his time, whose book "Commentaires" was called by Henri IV "The Soldier's Bible," was born in 1855. By inheritance and choice he was a "Grand Seigneur." His love of splendour, pomp and ostentation was the canvas upon which his personality was displayed. More than any of his ascendants, whose genealogical history he gives in detail, he believed in the superiority of his caste, and looked down upon any one whose ancestry could not compare with his. He was artist, man of letters, poet, decorator and friend to countless geniuses and near-geniuses, with most of whom he eventually quarrelled. His was a morbid heredity. Some of his forebears pushed exaltation and devotion to king and country beyond prudent limits: others were shut-in, retiring, colourless; some were obsessed with cherished manias and spent their lives fighting imaginary microbes and contaminations; others claimed intimacies with the beyond; a few, more artistic, sought adventures—and got them.

His childhood was little impressed by his immediate family and he never felt their influence. He was sent to college as soon as he was old enough to be accepted, and spent there the darkest years of his life. He called that period "My Prisons." There he first displays a disdainful attitude and cultivated *"le plaisir aristocratique de déplaire"* with the customary result—it being universally conceded that boys are the least promising soil in which to sow superiority and disdain.

The war of 1870, destined to revolutionise France and strike the fatal blow to the nobility, brought him home, a poetic, dreaming, intolerant youth of fifteen, who watched his country's agony without trace of interest, without the faintest understanding of what it meant. In fact, all of Robert de

Montesquiou's life seemed unaffected by outside events, political, economic, religious. Perhaps this aloofness or detachment from what may be called worldly affairs is, next to inherent but carefully concealed arrogance and self-satisfaction, the most distinguishing trait that reveals the modern exponent of socratic love to the casual observer.

Like most of the nobility, the de Montesquious lived quietly during the first years of the Third Republic. Though the chances of reviving the monarchy seemed slight, the hope of seeing a king again on the throne of France was in the hearts of all monarchists. It was easier then to agree upon the one to be placed there than it is to-day. The criticalness of the situation of the nobility at the time of Robert de Montesquiou's youth compelled the Legitimists, the Orleanists, the Bourbonists, to join hands against the common enemy. The Faubourg St. Germain was in full swing; its exclusiveness made it the rendezvous of the oldest families, and the scandals which were bound to arise in that restricted circle were quickly hushed up in order to keep its reputation and to set an example to the "plebeian world." Indeed, at the time of Robert de Montesquiou's adolescence the nobility had begun to accept the idea of a republic and he escaped the period of transition that his parents and forebears had known.

De Montesquiou was brought up in the atmosphere of the Church and he does not seem to have lost his faith; however, he might have lost it and the reader of the memoirs not know it. Never once, in these three volumes, does the author open up the treasuredly preserved and carefully sealed envelope of his personality. The reader does not know what his life, other than material, has been; there is no information of his political aims, religious beliefs, moral tendencies, temptations, loves. His sole ambition seems to have been to write a diary, a retrospective diary, which lacks the true character of such

writing: to put the author face to face with himself. These memoirs may be compared to a perfectly focussed series of projected pictures, of names and personalities that pass and re-pass before the reader. To understand them, he has to use his imagination, or better, his knowledge of modern Parisian life.

Robert de Montesquiou was a good-looking man. He inherited the "old French politeness," and acquired suavity and "standards." Self-appreciation was his most conspicuous possession. He had the highest opinion of his value, his genius, his manners, and he puts himself on a pedestal with the best grace in the world. His pride was beyond qualification; he disdained the members of his own caste because they did not have his talent, and he despised artists because they did not have his background and descent. This made life often difficult, especially as he admired himself the more for this self-recognition.

What saved him and made him a striking figure whom every one sought to know was his artistic sense which never failed him and his extravagant ways which filled his contemporaries with envy or admiration.

There are few famous men and women "of the world" of the past fifty years that Robert de Montesquiou did not know. He loved them when they flattered him, but he always criticised sharply, often humorously. He was sensitive and vindictive, resenting unpleasant remarks, never forgetting them, and ready to take up a quarrel and stab his enemy. His temerity might readily be taken for courage, but in reality it was contempt for the opinion or feeling of others. In the display of it he reminds one of Oscar Wilde.

He had two passions that he discusses: poetry and decoration. His first volume of verse was entitled "Les Chauves Souris." It disparaged the Empress Eugénie and exalted the mad King of Bavaria. The second, "Les Hortensais Bleus," was rated significantly symbolic, while the third sang the

praises of his Alcibiades, Gabriel d'Yturri, with whom he lived for a quarter of a century. Toward the end of his life he wrote three small volumes of war poems.

He decorated and furnished three habitations that elicited the praise and excited the wonder of Parisian society: the apartment in the Quai d'Orsay, the Pavillon des Muses in Versailles and the Palais Rose in Le Vésinet.

His description of the old garret in his father's home, transformed into a most luxurious and studied masterpiece of a dwelling, is enchanting. His fancy carried him along in the decoration of it, as it did in his recollection; it must, however, have been rather stifling, so full was it of skins, rugs, tapestries, draperies, furs, the ceiling being decorated and draped in the same manner as the walls. It was while Montesquiou lived in that house that he received the visit of Mallarmé, the poet, who was so charmed by the oddity of it that he described it to Huysmans.

Throughout the three volumes of "Les Pas Effacés," the reader feels the pride of the author, so egocentric that he brings everything to himself and gives very little. His idea of his poetic talent is first reflected in that sentence, which is clever enough to sound modest: "On my mother's wedding-day, Lamartine condescended to appear at his balcony, and extended propitiatory blessings in the direction of my parents. I have often blamed them for the gift which I believe I have received, which has not made the happiness of my life." When he makes the only description of his ego, he says: "I will now make a proud statement. I dare compare myself to one of those flowers which the Far East, where they grow, teaches us to enlarge by suppressing the buds of neighbouring stems." And further: "Shall I have been something similar to that dishevelled, hypertrophied chrysanthemum 'ten thousand times sprinkled with gold'?"

There is no denying that he had talent and that his talent was acknowledged by a number of the best literary judges.

Maurice Barrès dedicated to him "Le Secret de Tolède" and M. de Montesquiou cites with evident satisfaction:

To the Comte Robert de Montesquiou
To the Poet,
To the artificer of so many objects and figures,
to one of the first apologists of El Greco,
and who, himself,
some day will find his discoverer and his apologist.
In friendly remembrance of his admirer and neighbour.

Anatole France, who knew him well, appreciated his talent and wrote to him, after the publication of "Offrandes": "I re-read your Offrandes with love; you are *the* poet of this war." On another occasion, he said: "I love you, because you are proud."

No quotation could more satisfactorily convey M. de Montesquiou's appreciation of himself than the following, about a wealthy uncle, a banker, who did not leave him any money: "He was incapable of feeling the honour that had been granted him when he became my godfather."

He quarrelled with nearly all his friends, generally blaming himself for severing friendly relations, but at the same time making it clear that his pride was responsible for it—thus absolving himself. He had a grudge against Paul Bourget, whom he accused of being mercenary. He regrets not having asked d'Aurevilly to partake of some of the literary secrets he possessed; no one else save Bourget knew them, but "he will not tell them: he knows many interesting things but they are never the ones he tells."

All the famous poets of the time, José-Maria de Heredia, François Coppée, Verlaine, Comtesse de Noailles have their "day" in the memoirs, as well as Whistler, Goncourt, Moreau and countless others who visited him in his second home in rue Franklin, now occupied by Georges Clemenceau.

Robert de Montesquiou's pleasure was to give exclusive and sumptuous receptions which would display the originality of his taste and the splendour of his collections, and to bring together personalities that would satisfy his pride. These receptions were not planned for the enjoyment of his friends, but for his own. He confesses that he loses interest in the festivity as soon as the first guests appear. One of his "social talents" was to recite to a group of friends some of the "portraits" he used to write about women and men of his acquaintance, and in which, because the person was not named, he could give free rein to his irony, wit and venom. It is interesting to note that, all through his books, he vaunts his talent as a poet, which is really not as meritorious as his remarkable, substantial prose. He says what he wants to say—no more—in forceful and colourful language; he can be sarcastic and ironical, tender and affectionate, hard and sharp, bitter and cruel, humorous and witty. His images and pen-sketches are most vivid; at the same time, his transitions are well observed, carefully studied without effort, and it is only here and there that his style becomes affected and confused, especially in the few references to his acquaintance with Marcel Proust. Evidently, the ambiguous style of the latter sometimes influenced Montesquiou. He describes a visit he paid to a young, obscure musician who had been introduced to him by Marcel Proust: "When I entered his apartment, I found it, as I have just said, empty and barren, without other grace than that of harmony, ever present even when it was not heard, and quaintly evoked in the dining-room where quite frugal dishes must have been eaten, by an enormous plan of the Erard concert hall, which the two silent guests (separated by a quart bottle around the neck of which was a napkin-ring of beads) imagined crowded with a silent audience, fashionable and artistic amongst which, *in primis,* they placed Mme. de Brancoven, pianist and princess."

He was proud that he introduced Maurice Barrès to d'An-

nunzio, as he introduced d'Annunzio to Ida Rubinstein, Ida Rubinstein and La Duse to Sarah Bernhardt. For d'Annunzio he had boundless admiration and deep affection which increased with time and was never hurt by incidents that so often created difficulties between himself and his other friends. He had met the Italian poet through Sarah Bernhardt and at first had been disappointed at the disproportion that he felt existed between his favourite author, as an author, and the man. Later on, d'Annunzio expressed the desire to meet him again. From that time, they were "the best friends in the world."

That Robert de Montesquiou was morally unattractive is evident, but he had, despite his disdain and self-satisfaction, a charm and prestige which impressed the world and made him an outstanding figure.

The reader cannot help feeling that Rostand's picture, the least flattering, is the one most easily recognised. Peacock he was in reality, displaying his most brilliant colours when he had a responsive audience, but he was a refined peacock who found pleasure and fulfilment *en faisant la roue* to himself, watching his disdain with indulgence and pride, seeking comfort and happiness in his own flattering vanity. However, there is one chapter of the memoirs which, alone, could destroy the unflattering image that the impartial reader forms of him; the one he dedicates to Marguerite, his devoted and zealous servant, for whom his facile and versatile pen finds poetic and touching words to reveal his sensitiveness and gratitude for her who was like a mother to him and to whom he was a devoted son.

Very amusing are his comments on Goncourt, and his quotation from the "Journal" in which Montesquiou is depicted as "an amusing creature, with verbose speech, inexhaustible anecdotes, student of the science of fun, enslaved by the desire to please." This last charge is scarcely true. Either Goncourt read Montesquiou incorrectly, who based his whole life

upon "the aristocratic pleasure of displeasing" and never tired of the harmony of the phrase, or the disdainful esthete tried to please Goncourt, which is the greatest honour he could accord him and the deepest homage he could render a superior mind.

Despite his gifts, his facility, his artistic endowment and physical charm, it is difficult to conceive Robert de Montesquiou a happy man. He does not tell us, but we are free to infer, that a life filled with the exterior world, largely given up to interior thoughts and achievements, was empty, like a balloon which climbs in the sky so rapidly that it soon blends with the infinite, but which, when emptied of its gas, is a rag whose only *raison d'être* is that it has had its day.

One might agree with Mr. A. B. Walkley, the discerning English critic who was of the first to appreciate Marcel Proust's extraordinary merit, that "M. de Charlus is surely one of the most repulsive brutes ever conceived by a novelist"; but he would be an unfeeling and unjust critic who would say anything approximating that of Comte Robert de Montesquiou even though Charlus was patterned after him and *de mortuis nil nisi bonum* were out of style.

IX

UNPLEASANT NOVELS

I HAVE no doubt that countless readers of fiction share my regret that so many novels deal with unpleasant subjects, such as disease or degeneracy, or deal with pleasant subjects, love and life, for instance, unpleasantly. It seems to me that many such novels would be in no way impaired either in form or presentation by slight pruning. Take for instance "Streets of Night" by Mr. Dos Passos. It is a book that leaves a decidedly bad taste and withal it is an exceptionally clever revelation of three dissimilar personalities who had in common the fear of walking out and meeting life and going arm in arm with it to the end. Delete the useless, profane and vulgar words; have Ellen's "gentlemen friends" treat her as if she were a human being; muzzle the cemetery night-watchman and the book would be quite as interesting and convincing, and much more acceptable. I recall labouring a few years ago with the author of a book which has since made a great noise in the world, suggesting that he might change a few words, omit others and find synonyms for some that the whole world without discussion or agitation have decided not to use. Had I proposed to him that he go home and murder his wife and children I doubt that he would have shown such manifestations of horror and shock. When I asked him what he thought the consequences would be were I to use such words in talking to my patients that he used in communicating with his readers, he said he did not know and hoped I would not tell him, and then mumbled something about my profession not being an art. As he did not say "fine art" I dropped it and turned the conversation to his art which is a subject that writers rarely shy from.

I cannot understand why writers think they should have latitude that is denied others. A man or woman who goes unclad into the street, or stands naked before a window is sent to the station house or the psychopathic ward; the man or woman who does not take cover when nature seeks to free them from waste products is known to be drunk or demented; and there are few things that so testify dethronement of reason as the brazen public conjugal embrace.

It is given to few to be able to be profane without being offensive and there is only one thing more repellent than a foul-mouthed woman, a drunken one. This being so, why writers assume that they can go into great detail about such matters without giving offence, and more than that, why they assume the public will like it, is an enigma to me. When they say the public does like it, I answer: name an unpleasant book that has had a large sale; when they say they are indifferent to what the public says, I choose not to believe them.

But there are various kinds of unpleasant novels. Novels that deal with disease and terminal conditions such as degeneracy are disagreeable to most people. As Miss Rebecca West wrote of Dr. Henry Marks's first novel, "Peter Middleton": "One cannot open the mind to a book's beauty if one has to lie down between chapters to dab the forehead with Eau-de-Cologne." Many will be unable to read Dr. Marks's recent book, "Undertow," without resort to Cologne water; and few will finish it without the thought that the less they know of Volmers the happier they will be. The Volmer family —of German descent—consists of August, the father, a brute under the dominion of his primitive urges; his wife, a tender-minded, submissive creature, whose third childbirth deprived her of uxoriousness and fecundity; and three children, Mary, Florrie and Ronnie.

Mary, plain, flat and charmless, is riddled with father-love; Florrie, polyandrous, with curves and pulchritude gaited for the turf, as Mr. Sherwood Anderson would say, is an intuitive,

discerning person who takes Mary's measure early in life—when she wants to exhibit it, she calls her Mrs. August Volmer; Ronnie, indolent, overgrown, pimple-ridden, mother's lamb and father's cross, becomes a dope-fiend in his seventeenth year, while still in school.

Mr. Volmer has a violent temper, an uncontrollable tongue habituated to vile language, abiding hatred of his wife, and profound contempt for him to whom he invariably refers as "your" son. Whenever the reader encounters him, he is beating up Mrs. Volmer, abusing her, lavishing sarcasm on her son, or preparing to assault Florrie as she steps from the last rung of the ladder of virtue and the parental house.

How Ronnie gets the dope, its immediate and remote effects; how Florrie forces an entrance into Mrs. Warren's profession; how Mary makes a vicarious escape from household drudgery and the prospect of a sterile life by conscious and dream fabrication; and how Mrs. Volmer struggles to protect her lamb from the wolves—fate and father—are the substance of the book. Any one keen to know how such things are accomplished and attempted may learn them here. Dr. Marks's psychology is sound, his presentation of Freudian principles consonant with the master's teachings; and the somatic make-up of his leading characters harmonises with their psychic possessions and moral divagations. Moreover his literary workmanship, both in preparation and in presentation, is excellent after the fashion of Herr Gerhart Hauptmann; the story-telling art which he possesses to an unusual degree reveals his indebtedness to Mr. George Moore. He unfolds his tale in the most natural way, and all the occurrences in the Volmer family might well have been stenographic and photographic transcripts—all save Mary's dreams. They are too corroborative of one of Freud's most beloved theories.

The "analysts" will experience a thrill when they read that Mary, wandering in dreamland through a barren country, came suddenly upon a cluster of pointed houses, all of them save

one, which rose high above the others; all of them locked save one, at whose door was a man old enough to be her father. When he told her he could not take her in because it was forbidden, she said: "I have been everywhere, I have been to every house in the village, but no one answers; no one will let me in; I am cold and hungry." They will understand perfectly what Mary meant. Even those who are not Freudians will get Dr. Marks's message, but many like myself will not accept its contents at the face valuation. It is too palpably made to fit the case.

The subject of Dr. Marks's first book was disease, of the second, degeneracy. I am doubtful whether people by and large are interested in either. I know that people like to talk about their diseases, and in a country in which I once lived, they would, on small encouragement, talk of their moral infirmities (which they called virtues); but it is tiresome, even when you are paid to listen, to give ear to the ills of others. There is so much that is evil and ugly in the world of man's making that we crave to have our attention distracted from it, not concentrated on it. Some see ugliness where others see beauty. Dr. Marks, for instance, thinks the water "splotches" from bowl to bowl in the Pulitzer memorial fountain in an endeavour to escape from its ugliness, but I have heard artists wax eloquent of its beauty.

And finally I am not willing to admit some of Dr. Marks's implications; for instance, that Mr. Volmer's unique brutality was converted from latency to activity by his wife's unfortunate parturiency. His imbalance was stamped "Made in Germany." The legend may have been burnished by Mrs. Volmer and "her" son, but his brutality, the tone that makes the music in the book, was inherent, and it was the nourishing root of his children's abnormalities.

In reviewing this novel, Mr. Theodore Dreiser expressed the fear that the author has perhaps exaggerated the amount of cruelty, ugliness, alcohol, cocaine and sexual impurity a

family of five could get away with, and many will share his apprehension.

Mr. Dos Passos's book is concerned with persons that one has met and of whom we have all wondered what they made out of life. A young art professor, Fanshaw Macdougan, a budding violin virtuoso, Nan, and a clergyman's son ambitious to be a writer, David Wendell. It relates their individual endeavours to live and love and have careers. Fanshaw is an optimistic idealist, Wendell a pessimistic realist, and Nan a weathervane with a spiritual affinity for Fanshaw and a physical one for David.

Mr. Dos Passos would have us believe that all striving for a career is senseless. We are bound to be thwarted. Life is futile. It depends in a large measure on your start, that is, upon your handicap. If it is not too great as it was in Wendell's case one can encourage himself that he will at least get into the semi-final contest. He strives to prove to us that most people do not live, are not alive. One is tempted to say it depends upon your place on the mountain how much you see of what goes on in the plain, and when he scoffs at Fanshaw's idea of love, "The old dream of love; roses handed over supper tables at Capri, on a terrace with low music . . . sweet and low, sweet and low, wind of the western sea . . . and the moon rising out of the dark sea," well—*chācun son goût!* This is neither living nor loving, Dos Passos declares. Wendell was the one who dared to live, and yet he himself said he was only a "damn bundle of frustrations" because "the difference between us and people like Pico della Mirandola or Petrarch is they could get all that energy into thought, art for the liberation of the world. We fritter it in silly complications." Wendell did not dare to live very long. He was only twenty-three when he put a bullet in his brain.

Mr. Dos Passos obviously gets his slant on the Florentine humanist from Pater, who idealised and idolised him and if it were possible to call Laura to the witness chair she likely

would not admit that Petrarch got so much energy into art for the admiration of the world. I can easily understand that it was such books as "Streets of Night" that Professor Bliss Perry had in mind when he condemned recently those which harp with cynical insistence upon the meaninglessness, the emptiness, the futility of life.

Some people undoubtedly like autobiographical novels. I find the majority of them wearisome and unpleasant. They are usually written by men who have what the Freudians term an inferiority complex. I do not know that "Don Juan," Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn's last novel, is at all autobiographical, but Lucien Curtis reminds me of the man who went upstream so successfully, despite the hydra-headed, anti-semitic monster who tried to devour him.

The novel relates the marital life of an alleged American who "had always been afraid of words" and whose thought and conduct were conditioned chiefly by his "appetence," to use one of the author's favourite words. Lucien Curtis, a business man of artistic temperament, married, when he was twenty-five, Elise, a few years his junior. She was by nature a conformer to law and convention. He was by nature a German masquerading as an American, and though he had moral sensibility, he set no store by the conversation recorded in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. He wanted to have his cake and eat it. He wanted to be of the world and society and defy them. "Perhaps despite his tastes and his utterly free notions in art, politics and morals, perhaps he was very primitive." *Perhaps* is the word. He was primitive in the sense that an infant is primitive: when he saw something he wanted he helped himself and was astonished that any one was shocked or essayed to prevent him. He was infantile and selfish. The correct diagnosis was made by his wife. On the eve of his departure for Russia, "where there was a new and uniform code governing marriage and divorce which was marvellously sane and liberal," she said to him: "I know you are

not heartless, Lucien; I don't think you mean to be wicked. You are just monumentally selfish." His friend Bornheim viewed him from another angle: "Your immediate and specific condition is due to sexual maladjustment."

Lucien had loved Elise: "There was no doubt about that; but he had never felt for her the deep primordial urges toward the fire, the roof, the child. He felt these for Helga, a bundle of chaotic impulses until she met Lucien." This puritan maid of twenty is as much like a New Englander as she is like a Hottentot. Though she did not insist that her god be wrapped in a bright cloud when he visited her, she made him feel like a regal donor: "You have truly given me everything," she said. Although it is not recorded, the reply was probably: "I'll say I have!" "He found that he and Helga were strangely akin in all fundamental relations and appetences."

Lucien did not love Elise, because "she had never turned her head to be kissed, or offered to perform some little service for him or to fetch a book or to hold his coat, or rubbed her fingers or a comb through his hair, or put her hands over his eyes, or soothed him with words." Then again, she had never taken account of his small and perhaps foolish needs. He liked his fruit and coffee the moment he came out of his bath; she had to dress, too, and she could not get them for him, so they were incompatible, soul-mateless.

Elise won't divorce him. He thinks it is pure cussedness on her part, an amalgam of Presbyterian teaching and American legislation, but she protests it is because she loves him. So Lucien fumes, philanders, and frequents bootleggers. But it doesn't get him anywhere. Elise is indulgent, but unyielding; father Curtis is indulgent but orthodox conventionally; Mrs. Strong is sympathetic but determined to orient Helga. Lucien sees no escape. Then he recalls the "beautiful semi-divorcée," Grace, whom he had met at a meeting of dealers on works of art in the Middle West, and who had said to him a few minutes after the meeting: "When this Johnnie

is through making an ass of himself, we'll beat it. Just follow me." "She took him to her little apartment full of books beautifully bound, slightly exotic books, and of many cushions and shimmering draperies, and she brought gin and orange juice and cigarettes, and they sat down side by side on the divan." Every prospect was pleasing and only public opinion was vile: "Public opinion is about the most stupid and corrupt thing there is. All progress is made in the face of public opinion. Society, stupid, cruel, and ferocious, has the whip-hand of one. The evil it imposes upon the innocent objects of its blind force robs them of their innocence."

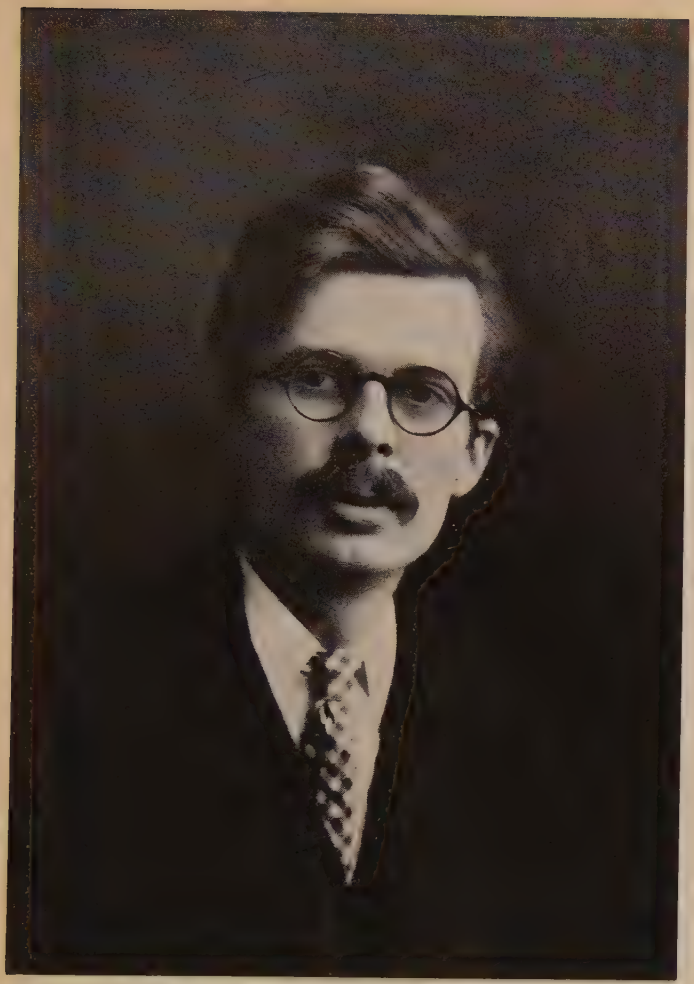
He telegraphs Grace, who drops her knitting and comes to New York immediately. "How good of you to come," said he gallantly, when he met her at the Pennsylvania station. "It is good of you to have given me the incentive," was the courteous and cringing reply. "How long can you stay?" said he, with pumped-up appetency. "Until next Spring," she murmured. This was a facer to Lucien, for Helga still hovered in his heart. Grace's point of view as well as her pulchritude appealed to him. She had discovered that "the Christian virtues were not virtues at all, but just ugly diseased attempts to fly in the face of human nature and all nature," and "she was free of the ordinary torments of remorse and possessiveness, of the desire to wreak upon man the false sense of sin with which most women approach love. She was devoid of sex antagonism, with which the good woman so often regards the object of her love. She could be as kind to a lover as she would have been to a friend." And, aided by copious drafts of a dark, lustrous, heady wine from the vineyards of the Holy Land that Bornheim had thoughtfully sent her, she was wondrous kind to Lucien. But Grace, who had hoped for a few thieves and prostitutes in her street to enliven things, "beautiful, brave, honourable, kind Grace" was capable of what seemed to be at first sight sacrifice, but what in reality was expediency based on foresight: "I still have the edge and

force to ease you of your pain over Helga. I won't wait till I lose it."

And so she went while her going left them both a little sorrowful, a little lonelier than they had been. Then Lucien gave himself over to reflection: "Nearly all the legal formulations of any given age lag fifty or a hundred years behind the perceptions and needs and practices of the more civilised people living in that age. That's the hell of it. That's the reason decent people are always in hot water. The mob, which is satisfied with the crude old stuff, then proceeds to call the decent soul indecent, immoral, seditious. It claps pacifists in jail and outlaws people who can't live in a state of sex-slavery. That's the history of mankind in a nutshell. There's nothing peculiar in our situation."

He longs for an atmosphere free from "the three most pestiferous influences in history"—the home, the church and the school—and so he sails for Europe, where everything is so shipshape, where pestiferous influences no longer pestifer, and where one can indulge his appetences. Perhaps it is too much to hope that he will follow Mr. Haywood's example and stay there, for Lucien is a restless Bolshevist. Moreover, the war that Mr. Lloyd George has been prophesying may break out, and he just can't stand war. It has the same effect upon him that "Don Juan" has upon me.

Then there are two other types of unpleasant novels, the clever and the stupid. My example of the former is "Antic Hay," of the latter "Arlie Gelston." Mr. Aldous Huxley's novel is not stupid, it is clever, witty and satirical, but it is unpleasant. In discussing "Ulysses" (the parent of "Antic Hay") I said that it was more than likely that few could read it through save as a stunt. "Antic Hay" most readers will find tedious because vulgarity, facetiousness, blaspheming, silliness, even when tinctured with salaciousness, are tiresome. Mr. Huxley no doubt got much amusement from lampooning his acquaintances, satirising his friends and painting a realistic



ALDOUS HUXLEY

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picture of the activities and indulgences, of the vices and virtues of a small set of decadents in London at the present day, but the feeling inspired in his readers is one of contempt for Gumbril, the inventor of "trousers with a pneumatic seat inflatable by means of a tube fitted with a valve, the whole constructed of stout seamless rubber, enclosed between two layers of cloth," and the lamenter of society's decay. Although one's sympathies are aroused by Lypiatt and his efforts to conceal the fact that he is a moron we feel nothing but contempt for the physiologist Shearwater and his lecherous wife, and disgust for Coleman, Marquis de Sade's disciple, given over to profanity and insanity. Of his creations, Mr. Bojanus, the philosophic and garrulous tailor and Gumbril *père* and Emily are the only ones that seem quite human. None of the others elicit the reader's interest, nor does he concern himself with their conduct or their fate. Mr. Huxley's characters are to me what the sky signs in Piccadilly Circus were to Gumbril: epileptic symbols of all that is most bestial and idiotic in contemporary life. "How I adore them!" says Mrs. Viveash. "Those wheels that whizz round till the sparks fly out from under them; that rushing motor and that lovely bottle of port filling the glass and then disappearing and reappearing and filling it again. Too lovely." "Too revolting," Gumbril corrected her.

Unless one is interested in those features of contemporary life "Antic Hay" will bore him, if he is interested it may divert him. In either case it will disgust him.

However, it has its use; it reconciles us to the life most of us know and to the world in which most of us live, in which so much is dull, drab, and routine, and where all women are not harlots and all men buffoons.

One of the questions that I should like to ask the average well-bred and well-read person is: "What is the stupidest novel you have ever read?" Should any one turn the tables and say: "What is the stupidest *you* have ever read?" I should

answer, were it asked to-day, sincerely and without hesitation: "Arlie Gelston." It might not be a truthful answer, for I have a facility for forgetting stupid novels, and in a long life spiced with novel-reading I have forgotten many. Mr. Roger Sergel's production re-invokes a shadowy reflection of them all. We might tolerate its subject, its people, and their reactions to life, if any artistic satisfaction were to be obtained from the language or the presentation; but it is poor in conception and poorer in execution. It will probably appeal, however, to a certain public in the same measure as the French "Romans Populaires" editions appeal to the midinettes of Paris, and it is about as good a sample of the national literature.

The reader wishes that Arlie Gelston might be a monster, and is disappointed from the first encounter with her that she is an ordinary girl of a small Middle West town. There is so little decency in her, so little sense of fitness, and her friends, playmates, acquaintances and surroundings are so much like her, that the reader feels a deep gratitude toward some happy providence that all high-school girls do not become mothers at an age when they should be looking forward to putting up their hair. The Gelston family is drab, deadly, and commonplace. There is not a moment in the lengthy novel when the reader feels moved or touched, and even when Arlie is married to Herbert, her child's father, love is still an unknown quantity. Herb's family, a cut above Arlie's, may be true to life. His mother achieves culture through intensive and conspicuous reading of *The Atlantic Monthly* and an occasional furtive glance, when no one is looking, at *The Saturday Evening Post*. Her husband is the only interesting character in the book; the author had a happy thought when it occurred to him not to enlarge his portrait; he might have spoiled it. The only other meritorious picture of the book is that of Coon Falls whose inhabitants believe that Des Moines is the hub of the universe. I can imagine that Mr. Floyd Dell experiences a surge of nostalgia when he reads it and that the

author's fellow-members of the Midland Magazine glow with pride while telling one another that cultured foreigners when they reach this country seek the location of Coon Falls with the same earnestness as the sick enquire for Rochester, Minnesota.

The forced and urgent marriage of Arlie and Herbert was difficult to handle successfully, and although their reactions might well have been interesting, the author found it simpler to kill Herbert, by overturning his Ford, at the time when the little town in which he was assistant cashier of the bank was about to learn the truth about the past and the birth of Gerald. Mr. Sergel here also missed his chance of putting some emotion into his novel. That Arlie should have chosen to marry Ed Somers, a few weeks later, without loving him, is probably due to her overflowing sexuality, but the author does not seem to know it. Ed is a dreamer; he wants to own a "show-shop" that will bring ecstasy to the "movie-fans" of Grand Forks, and the alternation of his loving nature and his bad temper, mixed with an equal amount of admiration for "a pretty smile and a good ankle" and dreams of a bungalow and a big back yard, do not prevent him from sinking in the Isis Palace all the money Herbert left to Arlie.

The style of the book is desperately bad, and the effort imposed upon the reader who tries to understand the meaning of some of the sentences is disheartening. Boileau in "L'Art Poétique" gave counsel to future writers that Mr. Sergel might safely ponder over: "When you wish to say that it is raining, say, 'It rains.'" It is too simple for the author: "The rain had fallen until now its slant striation was a faintly permanent grain of the near houses and of the distant red and slate-grey buildings of Main Street, standing three blocks distant beyond a length of soaked garden and pasture. As Mrs. Gelston made out the figure of some one walking down the cement walk at the pasture's edge her bleached face broke into wrinkles concentric about her spectacles and weak mouth;

then, as the figure grew definite and she saw that it was a youth encased in a familiar raincoat . . ." It is said that Mr. Sergel is a teacher in a college. I can imagine some one daring enough to say, he teaches English.

I am curious to know how so many gifted young writers convince themselves that the characters they create should be ugly, brutal, vicious, depraved; also how they convince themselves that the public will be interested in them. Why write about people that one would flee from in life as he would from the plague or a book agent? There are many nice people who are interesting, who overcome difficulties, surmount obstacles, solve personal and social problems that excite the wonder of their friends and the admiration of a considerable part of the world. I know a man in whom I discern more of the attributes of Him who died to save mankind than in any one I have ever met. He is a conspicuous, semi-public figure in this country. Since the day when he, like Sherwood Anderson, began delivering newspapers at front and kitchen doors in a Southern city, down to the present, when he is a great though modest power, there have been a dozen incidents in his life around which might be woven most subtly a web of motives, and one event at least that would give the narrative a splendid epic flavour.

From the reader's standpoint, I suggest that we have a Sabbatical year from Campaspes, David Wendells, Colemans and Zoës, Ronnies and Florries; that we be permitted to play with Alice Adams, observe Gwenny give her heart's blood in vain, associate with Bess Ryeborn who, Miss Sidgwick assured us, "never messed things, or dropped things, having the quick firm fingers of art" and go to Enchanted Italy with Lotty Williams or any one that Lady Russell will supply.

The pause will refresh us and we shall return with renewed energies to degenerates and drug fiends, harlots and harpies, radicals and reformers after a year's tarry in the realm of beauty.

X

THE STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN FICTION: PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVELS

HUMAN behaviour has always been the most interesting thing in the world. Novelists by and large have confined themselves to portrayal of behaviour of individuals in a state of frenzy, usually from love, frequently from religion, occasionally from fear. The result is that human behaviour of certain elicitation is very well documented, but the manifold adjustments which constitute life have been left to the psychologist to study and to describe. The average individual sleeps about two hundred and fifty thousand hours of his life; he is fortunate if he is in love, fifty thousand hours, and unless he be unusually unfortunate or a reformer, he is not in the throes of other dominant emotions more than a few thousand hours. The remainder of the time he is adjusting himself to his environment, oftentimes struggling to escape it and this not only necessitates knowledge of the universe and of self, but also requires imagination. These adjustments, study and imagery are being described by writers of fiction and the public calls them psychological novels. At least it may be said that their aim, and that of psychology, are similar: to increase and disseminate knowledge of human nature, and to suggest a way to shape and systematise such knowledge for the benefit of mankind, including ourselves.

The presses are throwing off such novels every day. I shall consider two of them, one French, the other English: "Rabevel" and "The Orissers." M. Lucien Fabre is a novice in the realm of psychology; his training was on locomotives and as an automobile engineer; Mr. L. H. Myers is a student of

psychology and the son of a man whose name is inseparably associated with psychic research.

M. Lucien Fabre agrees with Pascal that there is no passion without excess, and Bernard Rabevel from his birth is in the throes of cruelty, cupidity and concupiscence. He is a little boy when we meet him, but he is the distinct pattern of what he becomes later. His family consists of grandfather Jérôme, an ardent republican, obsessed with "Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité"; his grandmother Catherine, a God-fearing woman who had vainly endeavoured all her life to bring her family back to the Church; two uncles, Rodolphe, of shut-in personality, and Noë, a composite of idealism, sentimentality, lyrism and good sense, who earns his bread carpentering; and Rodolphe's wife, a virtuous woman. Jérôme's eldest son had married a woman of loose character; he died soon after and when Bernard was born, the mother abandoned him to have the freedom that a dissolute life necessitated.

The keynote to Bernard's make-up was revealed the first day he went to school; his desk was lacking a screw; no one was looking so he took one from the next desk, but immediately put it back, went to the farthest one, took a screw and adjusted it to his desk. Shrewd, sly and determined, from that day he took what he wanted from God, man and state, without sense of obligation or guilt. He grew up heartless, fearless, devoid of sense of morality or responsibility, but with unusual intelligence, energy, perseverance and ambition. When he was thirteen, one day he saw a bulldog break the back of a cat and the scene enthralled him. He went to the kitchen, took a kitten from the basket, threw it to Tom and when he saw blood dripping from his jaws, he thrilled and glowed. The next day he repeated the experience, but the third day he was caught by his uncle Noë, who forgave him, for he knew not what he did. One day, on returning from Church, where he prepared for his first communion, he played with Tom outside his master's shop; the latter, one of the many Jews of

the region, observed him without being seen; the dog entered the shop and Bernard followed him; they were alone before the cash drawer; he started to rob it, but Tom was on him in a bound and held him until his master came: "And you are making your first communion to-morrow; a Jewish child would never have done it; but I forgive you and will never tell on you." Bernard smiled and went away. That night he was feverish and delirious, but insisted on going to communion the next morning. Every one was impressed with his piety and behaviour. When the carriage in which the family drove home passed the Jew's shop, Bernard, pretending to be faint, dropped the glass of the door and leaned out; deftly he lanced the blade of a long knife at the shopkeeper; he missed him, but the blade landed between the shoulders of the dog and killed him.

Bernard's adolescence was peaceful; the monster in him seemed to have died; his school career was noteworthy chiefly for the friendships of Abraham Blinkine and François Régis. The former, of a literary turn of mind, was going to college and the latter had chosen to follow his father's career—sea captain on merchant ships. Bernard was too poor to go to college, but as he would not follow the trade of either of his uncles, he was sent to a Jesuit college. There, a remarkable change took place in him. He became religious, ardent and reliable; he was overwhelmed with the beauties of religion and dreamed of being a martyr; his grasp of mathematics and logic was stupendous. When he was graduated, he was ready to adopt the religious life but asked for a fortnight that he might reflect upon it.

Returning from graduation, he stopped at the apartment Abraham Blinkine shared with a midinette where he found them and François. Bernard told them of his intention to become a priest but his friends advised him to have some contact with life before he finally decided. François showed him the photograph of a girl whom he hoped to marry; it was Angèle

and Bernard recalled that she had often tried to awaken his interest, but he had disdained her. That evening, on the point of returning to the college to say he had decided the cloth was his vocation, he heard a noise in an adjacent room occupied by a maid servant. He was knotting his tie; he dropped it, went to the maid's door, forced it, wounded the man who was with her, threw him out and took his place. The next day, he went to see Angèle, told her that François did not love her, that he had a mistress, that François' father had asked him to warn her and convinced her that he was not only a good Samaritan but that he loved her. Angèle, a fine, hyper-sexed character, promised to marry Bernard, for whom she had had a *"béguin"* since childhood.

Satisfied with his first day, Bernard went to call on Abraham; he wanted to get a letter to his father, an influential business man, who would aid him to a position. Abraham kept him waiting a few minutes and meanwhile he secured the favour of the midinette and promises of future kindness.

M. Blinkine not only gave him a position but sent him to inspect and report on one of his interests in the South of France. He showed himself as facile in business as in love; within a few days he had put the Société Anonyme on a paying basis and he had signed contracts, leases and loans that attested his organising genius. The negotiations brought him in contact with a rich landowner and his daughter, Reine. Like a flash it occurred to him the latter might promote his ambition and he makes acceptable love to her; he is on the point of being betrothed when he receives a letter from Angèle saying she has discovered his duplicity and that she is going to marry François. He returns to Paris and makes his report to his employers. They see clearly the great profits that will result from a business that was previously run at a loss, but they are staggered at their agent's self-confidence and duplicity. They also realise that Bernard, while apparently promoting their interest, has been concerned with shaping the

ways that will throw the business into his own lap. When he learned that soon after Angèle and François were married, the latter sailed for a three-year trip, he became obsessed with the idea of possessing Angèle, but M. Blinkine wished him to go at once to Bordeaux to look into the affairs of the shipping firm in which both François and his father were employed. Before he went he sent a telegram to Angèle, signed by the name of the chief clerk in the Bordeaux office, saying that her husband would be in Bordeaux the next day, that his ship would be laid over for twenty-four hours and to come at once. She took the evening train and after it got under way, Bernard burst into her compartment and they spent the night together.

On leaving Angèle at her hotel the next morning he promised to return in the afternoon and take her to the country where they would shelter their love, but business engrossed him to such an extent that he dismissed Angèle from his mind. However he had not forgotten that she was waiting for him when he accepted Mazelier's invitation to dinner, but cupidity was stronger than lust. After dinner they were joined by two young women of easy virtue and as Bernard went to the room of one of them, suddenly the episode of the kitten and of the dog, the knife thrust at the Jew, the rape of the servant after he had thrown the lover from the room and the picture of Angèle in a strange hotel waiting for him in the throes of love, unrolled themselves before his eyes. He smiled and wished Angèle could see him at that moment. When he awakened after a night of excess, he felt a wave of regret and piety sweep over him; he hated himself for having transgressed and felt that God would not help him in his schemes if he continued to offend Him in this way.

When he arrived at the hotel, Angèle was ready to go to Paris; he had little difficulty in persuading her to go to the country where they would live a romantic and passionate life until her husband came back. Under the influence of Angèle's love, Bernard became quite human and lived the happiest

days of his life; he was an ardent lover, a devoted friend and she seemed to become as much a part of his existence as his many financial schemes were. Then Angèle fell ill and Bernard discovered that the kind old lady who took care of her, enraptured that she was going to have a baby, was a large shareholder in the Bordes Company that he was investigating. He planned immediately to deprive her of her fortune; he was suave, tactful, sympathetic and advised her about her affairs.

On the arrival of François, Bernard returned to Paris. The thought that he had lost Angèle tortured him and he confided in Abraham who laboured with him to bring about a change of heart and to make him see the error of his ways. Abraham was living a severe, studious and austere life which eventually led him to conversion and to the priesthood. Bernard put through an order in the Bordes Company in which he was now an authority that François' leave should be shortened. Then he experienced a strange transformation: suddenly his love for Angèle was replaced by hate; he hated her for having deprived him of his taste for everything save her; and he hated her for having submitted to the caresses of her husband and for her inherent goodness. He refused to see her, and when she forced her way into his office, he was seized with a desire to kill her. She eluded him and went to Abraham's house and fell into profound illness. As soon as Bernard heard of it, he went to see her, was the donor for a blood-transfusion that saved her life, and nursed her during her convalescence as a mother would a child.

When she recovered, he was seized with a furor of finance; he had developed a plan that would ruin Blinkine and Mulot and enrich him. Through the kind offices of a Venezuelan, he was introduced, under an assumed name, to Mulot's mistress who though no longer young still had great charm and attraction. Rabevel made violent love to her. She took him to her apartment and was on the verge of giving him proof of his dominion over her when Mulot, returning unexpectedly, recog-

nised Rabevel at the same moment that the Cyprian realised that he was their son. This is the first staggering blow that Rabevel has received and for a time, he is bewildered. Not that he hesitates to ruin his father but he is afraid if his paternity is discovered it will interfere with his prospects. He confides his knowledge to Angèle and she advises him to talk it over with his mother. From her he learns that she had never told Mulot, her lover that, when she was the wife of the eldest Rabevel, she had had a baby. When Mulot learns the fact, he offers to take Bernard into his firm at a small salary. This decides him to accomplish the ruin of the firm.

Angèle, influenced by Abraham, has realised her sin, confessed it, is penitent and resolved to transgress no more. Rabevel swears vengeance, but he cannot stop the pursuit of wealth and power long enough to wreak it. He becomes engaged to Reine Orsat and by means of her father's credit and money he puts through one of the most astonishing combinations the financial world has ever seen. He shows a capacity for grasping details, for anticipating objections and eliminating obstacles that is truly marvellous. Not only has he a sense of the reality of things which exist only in his own mind, but he conducts the negotiations with such assurance and *sang-froid* that he is regarded by the captains of industry and the generals of finance as a wizard. All the time, however, he was tortured by one thought: a promise he had made to Abraham that he would give up Angèle if Abraham would give him his shares in the Bordes Company. He cursed fate which prevented him from blending his life with Angèle's, while working on the trap that would catch Blinkine and Mulot and which he would bait so appetisingly that they were bound to fall into it.

After her illness Angèle went to her father, in the country. Bernard accompanied her and wished that he might stay, but his plan to ruin the firm called him to Paris. Before he went, he completely won over Angèle's father by promising to establish a powerhouse that would supply electricity to the

village and enrich him and his friends. Then he sprang the trap set for Blinkine and Mulot: the former went insane and the latter was found dead in a train. At last he was rich, but he must be richer, so he married Reine, but even that did not purge him of lust for Angèle. To give himself a suitable background he gave his mother, Mulot's widow, a permanent income. Everything now seemed clear sailing. The bread he had cast upon the waters had not only come back to him in the form of cake, but everything that he touched turned to gold. His wife was devoted, created a favourable atmosphere and had borne him a son; Angèle also had borne him a son, Olivier. But luxury and leisure bored him and he was constantly in a state of anger, dissatisfaction and discontentment. One thought dominated him: to get possession of Angèle again. He soon sees the way to do it: her father had become entangled in business difficulties, resulting from the advice he had given him. Bernard waved his financial wand, drove off the carrion, cast out his business net, dragged in the sharks, made himself *persona grata* with Angèle's father and earned the gratitude of the community.

Angèle capitulated, but *au fond* she was a good woman, and soon she was seized with profound remorse. She had sought grace and thought she had received it, but she fell again; despairing that she could ever go straight, she tried to throw herself from the window. Bernard caught her at the opportune moment. Father Blinkine, whose monastery was near, gave her absolution and reasoned with Bernard, but to no purpose. Bernard offered to take charge of the education of his natural son, Olivier, and afterward take him into his firm. Angèle saw the trap, but her husband would not allow her to refuse Bernard's offer, and he was profoundly grateful and articulate. On the platform of the station en route to Paris, Bernard encountered the kind old lady who had cared for Angèle in the illness of her first flight. She told him of her ruin, and of its entailments. The despair, crime and suicide of her brother-

in-law, the death of his wife, the homelessness of their little girl. For the first time in his life Bernard felt remorse and concern. They were new sensations and they bewildered him; he offered to give the little orphan girl and her uncle, a school teacher who had taken her, a home and to make him cashier in his firm.

When Angèle, her son and her husband returned to Paris, they were introduced to a violinist, Vassal, who had made a voyage in one of François' ships and had become very friendly with him. They and the Rabevel family attended a concert given by Vassal. François introduced Angèle and Reine to his artist friend. Vassal's wife, Pauline, Bordes's mistress, plays first violin in Bernard's orchestra from now on and Vassal himself the drum.

Reine bored Bernard; his legitimate son did not interest him; Angèle was wrapped up in Olivier and firm in her new conversion; no prospect was pleasing, and man continued to be vile. One evening he dined with Bordes who was accompanied by clever, sensual, charming, resourceful, depraved Pauline; she attracted Rabevel; a few weeks later he was looking over the photograph album in the house of the best known *appareilleuse* of Paris and he saw that of a girl who looked exactly like Pauline. She was sent for and said that her name was Viviane, Pauline's twin sister. After he had had brief possession of Viviane, she died, it was said, of hasty consumption.

M. Fabre now begins to line up his characters and get them off the crowded stage but their manœuvres and dispositions are not particularly concerned with the story. The reader might readily think that an effort was being made to divert his attention to Olivier who had seemingly inherited equally from both parents' qualities, but we refuse to be distracted by him.

All of the hero's appetites are readily satiated, save that for money. That appetite returned immediately when Bordes died and left a large part of his fortune, shares of the company, to Pauline whose real name was Balbine. Bernard sought her

out to buy these shares, was struck by her likeness to Viviane, and promptly fell in love. She had laid a trap for Bernard and he fell into it; she had pretended to be Viviane. Bernard introduced her to Angèle and to Reine who, knowing her husband was a great artist, welcomed her warmly and "Bernard found in the reunion of these three women a sort of sadic joy."

He quickly became enamoured of Balbine whose husband was on a concert tour. Messalina and the other ladies of antiquity who have left a reputation for consummate knowledge of the arts of love had nothing on Balbine; she knew all the rules and all the tricks, and her profound happiness consisted in breaking the one and playing the other. One night, Vassal, returning unexpectedly, came upon his wife and Bernard in a compromising position and attempted to kill Bernard, for which he was put in jail. Bernard started divorce proceedings and proposed to marry Balbine. When Vassal got out of prison he shot Bernard, but did not kill him. Balbine nursed him back to health and diverted and amazed him by the display of her amatoriness which the author assures us has rarely been equalled.

Bernard had meanwhile become a great power, very wealthy, and had gone into politics. Great wealth and power bring obligations even to a moral imbecile and Bernard, being often away from Pauline, her eyes rested lustfully on Olivier. She was determined that he should share her with his father. Torn between the desire to possess Balbine and fear of the consequences, he decided to leave Europe for the Orient. Balbine, learning of his plan, persuaded Bernard to take a similar trip: then Olivier headed himself in an opposite direction. Bernard had more than met his match in Balbine. When Olivier went to say good-bye to them, Bernard came in and killed his mistress; he then turned his sword on his son, but the latter seized a heavy candlestick, dealt Bernard a murderous blow but only succeeded in stunning him.

Angèle, the only woman he had really loved and Balbine, the

only woman who had ever diverted him, both having been killed by him, the one by his conduct, the other by his blow, the infirmities of age gradually stealing over him, Bernard thinks it wise to seek a little peace, so he appropriates the license and the name of the old school teacher, gets a position as teacher of young children, lives in a small room which overlooks the cemetery where Angèle lies and in a few years died a model death, of broken heart.

Interest in the study of human behaviour by novelists should be encouraged; only good can come from it. We have however a right to ask that the conduct described should bear the stamp of verisimilitude, of reality. Any one who can describe the character and conduct of a high grade imbecile in the way that Miss Willa Cather did in "Paul's Case" is deserving the thanks of every student of behaviour. My own reading convinces me that that was an exceptional contribution.

M. Fabre has set himself a difficult task and that is to depict the career of an individual who is at the same time characterised by complete absence of the sense of morality and an extraordinary possession of intelligence, a superman in the realm of affairs who not only has no conscience but who is a disciple and follower of the Marquis de Sade.

In the first place, it must be borne in mind that many deny that such paradoxical personality may exist, and in the second place, we should not be asked to accept statements that test our credulity or transcend our experience.

I am of the opinion that such persons as Rabevel exist. I do not think that many of them ever succeeded in getting away with their impulses or of satisfying them with the ease and readiness with which M. Fabre's Rabevel did. I can readily imagine that a boy who had fed kittens to a bull-dog for his pleasure might have been forgiven, even without punishment, and I can picture a kind, indulgent Jew, even a Christian, saying to a little boy whom he had caught with his hands in the cash box: "Go, and sin no more." But I cannot possibly imag-

ine, no matter how hard I try, a young boy who had thrust a long dagger at the heart of a neighbour and succeeded in killing only his faithful dog being allowed to go scot free even though he had committed the murderous assault on his return from his first communion.

Authors should be reasonable with us. We buy their books, we devote a great deal of time to them and they really ought not to treat us as if we had neither intelligence nor imagination. And this is only one of the counts in the charge that we have against M. Fabre. Difficulties of all kinds are solved too quickly, too readily, too invariably by Bernard. It is really asking too much of us to believe that every woman he met capitulated, that every scheme he developed went through, that every goose he saw was a swan.

We must purge ourselves of the admiration that we have of the French police, acquired, to be sure, largely from reading detective stories, in order to believe that they swallowed the cock and bull story Bernard told them after he murdered Balbine. Moreover, our observation and experience of the difficulty of remaining in one place or moving about without communicating with the *préfecture* just after the War must have been faulty. Clavenon left the country without knowledge of the police and Rabevel appropriated his name and teacher's license.

Reasonable persons will want some other assurance than that furnished by M. Fabre's description that sensations of morality and immorality alternate with such abruptness as they did in the case of Bernard and moreover that profound display of cruelty and lust only comes to cap the climax, as it were, of the outburst of kindness and virtue.

M. Fabre would have us believe that morality and immorality are two high peaks and that one not only vaults readily from the top of one to the other, but that he never succeeds to the top of one without experiencing an impulse to jump to the other. In reality, there is an enormous valley

between and the individual who would go from one to the other, even though he be a monster, must go through that valley.

Then there is Bernard's ability as a financier. In our country, we have men who are said to have a genius for finance, but our Wallingfords are usually men who have struck oil or stumbled on a mine. The giant geniuses of finance who have got rich by ruining their employers have passed from this land, and it will be difficult to convince any one who has had commercial experience with the French that they are now appearing in their country.

M. Fabre has overlooked a few details in the generalities of his plot and the reader is shocked to hear a young girl play Debussy in 1886, while Bernard is riding in a motor car. They are too premature!

As a stunt we can believe everything that M. Fabre says about Rabevel, save his end. Why should a man, born with moral anesthesia, which if it did not facilitate surely did not impede material success, having run the gamut of all the emotions and rung the changes on all pleasurable indulgence, install himself at the zenith of his career in an isolated house in the country overlooking a church and its graveyard in which a woman was buried whose only sin was that she had loved him, and begin teaching little children an evangelic morality which he did not believe? Could he give reasons for doing so? He should have been consistent and gone in to the Church. Instead of that he gave out that he had no faith or religious belief. Finally, he got old too fast. The best calculation leaves him under fifty when his son was wounded in the war, and yet within five years he was the "old man who took possession of the primary school of Pampelonne"; so we are compelled to disregard M. Fabre's evidence.

This story has interesting features, and *one* part of it—François' description of his meeting with Vassal—is full of poetic charm and nostalgia which the author has expressed in

the happiest words. But taken altogether it suggests that the members of the Goncourt Academy are growing old, that they are increasing in charity, but decreasing in discernment.

One of Mr. Myers's creations, Cosmo, is a monster also, but he was not in Bernard's class; his moral anesthesia was not so profound as Rabevel's nor was his intellect so alert and penetrating.

"The Orissers" is a story with a plot, not a probable one, but not of looser texture than "Jane Eyre," for instance. It abounds with absurdities and inconsistencies, but so does that novel, which now, nearly eighty years after publication, still moves many readers emotionally. It is a study of a county family, the Orissers, who have had an ancestral estate, Eamor, for more than five hundred years. It is one of their unconscious urges to keep it, to maintain it, to be an integral part of it. It is the symbol of the family.

The Orissers, at least those of them whose acquaintance we make in this book, are unusual. It is useless to deny that such persons exist, but I have never met an Orisser, nor an individual resembling any one of the Orissers, save the Egyptologist, Sir Charles Orisser, and Isabel, who play small rôles in the book. Sir Charles's sons by his first and second wives, Cosmo and Nicholas; his collaterals, Lilian, a cousin who became his third wife, and Isabel, an even more remote cousin, play the leading rôles on one side of the melodrama—while on the other are John Mayne, an international financier, who never encountered an insurmountable obstacle until he married Lilian, after Sir Charles had made her a widow by putting a bullet through his brain when it became all too obvious that studied disregard of his business affairs had brought him and those dependent upon him to financial ruin; his two nieces, Madeline his favourite and Nina her sister, whose determinations and activities are enigmatic, and Walter Standish, his confidential secretary, executor and logical successor.

Although these are the chief characters, none of them compares in importance to Allen Allen. He is to the Orissers what Pyotr Stepanovitch was to Nickolay Stavrogin and his group in Dostoievsky's novel "The Possessed." The son of a widow, he was as a youth wholly beyond maternal control. When he was nineteen he fled to the Continent and followed a nomadic life which took him eventually to Asia Minor with a small band of archæologists. With them he discovered the key to his happiness: the study of antiquity. Later he went to Cairo and fell in with Sir Charles Orisser, an archæological savant with a *noli me tangere* manner who, to all intents and purposes, had small dependence upon human contact. However, his conduct testified that this appearance was artifice. In his youth he had made an unfortunate alliance, the woman proving absolutely impossible, and the issue of that marriage was Cosmo, also "absolutely impossible," tolerated only on agreement that he would live abroad and go by another name.

In the language of modern pedagogues, Cosmo was an atypical child. Even as a boy he was "a terror." "He came into the world raging, and he never ceased to rage." On approaching adolescence he took to running away; and as he grew older these disappearances became more and more prolonged. Showing himself to be beyond control, he was finally left "to follow unmolested his own incomprehensible way of life."

After Allen had companioned Sir Charles four years, they made a trip to Europe and planned to meet Cosmo at Madrid, Allen having nurtured the belief that a *rapprochement* could be effected between father and son and that mutual benefit would accrue. In Madrid they met Lilian Orisser, a distant relative, barely eighteen, poor, charming and lovely, who was travelling in the company of a rich lady by whom she had been adopted. Cosmo did not keep his appointment with his father, and Sir Charles, Lilian and her protector and Allen went, in search of diversion, to the arid uplands which surround that unin-

teresting city. There they had a dramatic encounter with Cosmo who had gone to Madrid in company with a young French nobleman, sleek, silent and self-possessed, a member of the clan that Marcel Proust has typified in Baron de Charlus.

Lilian fell violently in love with Cosmo, and naturally Cosmo did not reciprocate. Lilian was very determined, however, and her conduct might readily be interpreted as compromising. She earned, but perhaps did not deserve, Cosmo's contempt, which developed into an idea that obsessed him, so that when Sir Charles announced to Allen the following year that he was to be married to Lilian (who had chosen him instead of John Mayne) Cosmo wrote saying that had he known it in time he would have hastened to England and dispatched her with a bullet. Soon after Sir Charles married and repaired to his ancestral estate, it became apparent to Allen that the Orissers were skating on very thin ice, but Sir Charles and his wife and young Nicholas, then ten years old, the son of the second marriage, "slipped into the placid sequence of the days without stir" and comported themselves as if they were in paradise.

When Allen first saw Lilian she did not appeal to him, but in the Eamor setting, when she seemed a happy wife, it was otherwise. They went for a long drive together soon after her arrival, and although there were no significant words, the cornerstone was laid of an understanding that endured and upon which the story was built.

John Mayne, who lived in the neighbourhood, came to welcome Sir Charles and Lilian home, and after the former's tragic death he married the widow and paid Sir Charles's debts. The mortgages on the Eamor estate were discharged and a new mortgage prepared in favour of John Mayne, who stated in the presence of witnesses that it was his desire to preserve Eamor for the family as an ancestral homestead.

But John and Lilian did not long live happily together.

They had scarcely finished their wedding trip before it was arranged that she should live at Eamor with Nicholas and Madeline, while Mayne would remain on the Continent.

Meanwhile Cosmo was doing stunts. He returned to Tornel (manufacturing city and seaport not far from Eamor, which had been embellished by Mayne's money and where Allen was employed in the museum that Mayne had endowed) with the determination, founded in hatred, of making trouble for Lilian. Allen, who up to this time had apparently had little contact and less converse with Lilian, sensed this and was ready to make any sacrifice, even his life, to prevent it, so he agreed to take Cosmo to South America. They started on foot for the wharf, three miles away, but after they accomplished half of the journey, Cosmo insulted Allen, then assaulted him and Allen decided to kill Cosmo by throwing him into the canal. He would have succeeded had it not been for the timely interference of some improbable creatures, half Argonauts, half philosophers, who fished them both out, and of Nicholas, who, though living "on the higher cerebral levels of the mind," for some reason wholly beyond divination, had driven, in his new motor car, to this squalid part of the city seeking appeasement from constant reiteration of the question *cui bono*.

Nicholas did not recognise his half-brother, but he felt sure that this unknown who had refused life "would initiate him into the secrets of humanity, would bring about the end of his own terrible sense of isolation, of his feeling that he stood outside humanity. He had always felt that men shared some secret in which he might not participate. He would learn that secret. He would tell the unknown everything; and the unknown would tell him everything." So he took him to a little cottage on the outskirts of Eamor village which Lilian kept open for the use of convalescents. Allen was against this. He sensed that it would thwart his ambition, but though Allen was at all other times a versatile, adroit, determined

and resourceful man, he was potter's clay in the hands of any Orisser.

The day Cosmo was taken to the cottage John Mayne returned from the Continent under sentence of death from a disease beyond medical or surgical skill. Although some attempt was made to keep from Lilian and others of the household the fact that Cosmo was occupying the cottage, all soon found it out save Mr. Mayne, who it was feared might decide to wreak his vengeance and at the same time keep his word that Eamor was to remain in the Orisser family, by giving it to Cosmo and thereby punishing Lilian, who by this time had felt the lure of lust for her young step-son Nicholas.

The interfamily tension was becoming high, and to relieve it, it was suggested that Madeline's sister Nina should be added to the community.

While John Mayne was dying and writing his memoirs Nicholas seduced his beautiful young cousin Isabel and Allen succeeded in establishing carnal relations with Lilian, while Madeline and Nina successfully planned to prepare John Mayne to leave the Orissers without house or funds when he ceased to be. Allen would take Cosmo to South America, but the latter declined to depart without first seeing Lilian with vengeance in his heart, so Allen finally killed him and the coroner's jury decided his death was due to alcohol and a misstep.

John Mayne played true to form and burned the mortgage in the presence of the family, but the self-contained and self-reliant Nina who witnessed the holocaust knew it was only a dummy she had substituted when she had abstracted the real document. Mayne died promptly, Nina's theft was detected and she was compelled by the omnipotent Allen to make restitution. Walter and Madeline got married and did their duty to the state. Lilian and Allen had their union legalised and went for a two year's archæological expedition to Peru to see how she would bear separation from Nicholas.

But the Orissers were constant as well as concupiscent, and when they returned from Peru Lilian and Nicholas continued to justify each other "in a course which it would have been hard to pursue quite alone."

Lilian and Nicholas are thus the heroine and hero of the story, though at times it would appear that Madeline and Walter would be, or that Cosmo or Allen was playing the leading rôle.

The book teems with psychology and philosophy; with aphorism and neologism. It is redolent of Plato and of Dostoievsky, and it gives evidence of having been done with great care and revision. However, the apprentice hand is apparent in every chapter. No one can say that the author's psychology is wrong, for no psychology can be wholly wrong. And up to date no psychology has been shown to be right. However, his pathology is wrong; "terribly" wrong, to borrow one of his favourite adjectives. Cosmo is a wrong one, psychologically and pathologically; Mayne is a wrong one pathologically. Temperate, hard-headed business men never take to the brandy bottle when they are dying of "internal cancer."

The character that is real is Madeline. The character that is unreal, improbable, impossible is Allen. The world may have Lilians and Nicholases. They must be rare and we hope they are sterile. If Mr. Myers had displayed the same insight into character and conduct in his masculine creations as he does in the narrative and descriptions of the contacts and connivances of Madeline, Nina and Lilian, he would have erected a monument to himself. Madeline particularly is an approach to perfection. Cosmo and Nicholas are flesh and blood, but they don't know where they are going, or why. Cosmo bore the hallmarks of high-grade imbecility in boyhood; and then his creator thought to make a Stavrogin of him, but he couldn't supply the "gland" that would effect the change of personality. He thought to make an Ivan Karamazov of Nicholas, but he succeeded only in forcing a "step-

mother complex" upon him. It is easy to believe that the Duc des Esseintes had made a profound impression upon Mr. Myers, for many of the characteristics of that notorious decadent are found in Cosmo and Nicholas.

Mr. Myers set himself the task of creating "abnormal" persons, and chronicling their behaviour. Many novelists have done it with brilliant success—Dostoievsky, Huysmans, Proust. They knew "degeneracy" in the quick, and their descriptions of it are recognised by students and masters of psychopathology to be true to life. Whether one who knows it from books and from imagination can parallel their accomplishments is questionable. So far the only Anglo-Saxons who have done it are the women writers of the present day, headed by May Sinclair. Mr. Lawrence draws "abnormals," but they are "reformers"; they have a mission, which is foreign to true degenerates, who do things because they cannot help it. Mr. Myers's "normal" persons, such as Madeline, Nina, Walter, are convincing. The reader feels that he can form some estimate of what they would do under given circumstances.

The author's conception of Allen eludes me. He is the mouthpiece of current psychological doctrine and opinion; he is a fountain of aphorism, a spring of pragmatism. He reads minds as readily and understandingly as motorists read danger signals. He gets pleasure from hardship and sacrifice when they are done in behalf of one whom he scarcely knows. His most concentrated interest is awakened in a person he has never seen, and he proceeds to devote his life to him, though the devotion jeopardises it. And yet all the time he is stalking his prey, he is conditioning a carefully planned determination which neither moral nor material obstacles are permitted to thwart. Yes, Allen is an enigma, more so than Nicholas, for he is more real.

Mr. Myers's achievement may be compared to that of a man who is ambitious to build himself a house and who believes

he can do it himself. He has thought about it a lot, and he has fairly definite ideas. After study of the best masters (particularly Slavic), he makes a plan, purchases or otherwise obtains the materials, then by long observation and study of the analogues of Plato, Pater, the poets and the philosophers in the building line, he acquires the knack of putting them together, or one upon the other. He sets to work resolutely and sticks to it until the job is done. Not infrequently he tears down and rebuilds, and this in conjunction with some unexpected problems that arise and prove insoluble, gives, to the person who looks upon it casually, or who comes with an idea of purchasing it, a sense of disproportion and uninhabitability.

However, the completed work is striking and, viewed from different angles, is both noteworthy and meritorious, but the individual who is seeking a house for occupancy or for admiration will reject it if he has an eye for beauty or is "practical." He will dwell upon the attractiveness of the Madeline wing, and he will recognise the faultless composition of the Isabel apartment. He will admit that the Walter apartment is conventional and not displeasing. He may even admit that the Mayne rooms, both those of John and of Lilian, are adequate, though the latter lack closet space. He will reject it finally because of the strangely tortuous and obscure Cosmo section. He may be so inconsiderate as to remark, "That is the evidence of the builder's failure."

In reality, Mr. Myers has shown himself in his first work to be a literary master-builder, for he has drawn one type true to form, Madeline. But there are many now in the field that display similar capabilities. What we are straining our eyes to see is if there is not a literary Cheops or Callicrates, a Pisano or a Palladino, a Wren or a McKim in sight.

XI

MR. FRANK SWINNERTON AND HIS BOOKS

IT has often been said and it is widely believed that every one who writes a novel takes himself as the leading character, or at least patterns one of the characters after himself. For a long time Mr. Frank Swinnerton, one of the young British novelists who has arrived, seemed the exception to the rule, but he can no longer qualify.

Felix Hunter is, in the language of the sport, a "dead ringer" for Frank Swinnerton. Felix, an artist, had all his life the mental adroitness of a woman; he was cursed with a scrupulous personal integrity which later researches among members of the complementary sex led him to suppose purely masculine. "The life of Felix was one long series of disasters—and one long happiness." That sentence does not accurately describe Mr. Swinnerton, but it would were there appended to it the words "due to his disposition and his artistic success." "Young Felix" is probably not wholly autobiographical, but I venture to say the opening and the closing chapters are. When an author begins and ends a book with the story of his life it is scarcely to be expected that readers will take the trouble to decide when he stops being real and starts being fictitious.

My idea of Mr. Swinnerton is that he is a young man who has not known many wants or desires that he could not promptly satisfy and that he lives in a tower which, though it commands all London, has its pediments in the north end. There he sits with eye glued to the ocular of the most powerful telescope in the world, which he trains on shop-girls, clerks, typists and Bohemians, employed and idle; what he sees he tells into a dictaphone. He is never excited, enthused, dis-

couraged, hurried, depressed or pessimistic, and often he has his tongue in his cheek. While the tower was being built, he encountered a strange, unhappy egotist seeking fulfilment in fiction writing: George Gissing, one of the most unbalanced sane minds of literature in the closing years of the nineteenth century, who made an impression upon sensitive young Swinnerton which was reflected in his first novels.

Gissing's subjectivity fascinated him and his mastery of the art of construction without plot, at times without specification, appealed to him; perhaps mastery is too strong a word, for Mr. Swinnerton has carried it beyond the point where Gissing found it or left it.

Mr. Swinnerton's self-imposed task is easily defined: to describe life as it is, not as he thinks it is or wishes it to be. He has vowed never to bear false witness, never to play the rôle of advocate; he elicits the testimony and submits the evidence and the reader renders the verdict. After hearing of life as Mr. Swinnerton sees it, the reader may feel that it should be reformed, remodelled, reordered; it is his job, not Mr. Swinnerton's. But he does not feel that life is intolerable as he does after reading some of Mr. Aldous Huxley's descriptions of it. But it is never Mr. Swinnerton's job to purge and purify, to cauterise and curette. He may be both prophet and reformer, but he never forgets that he lives upon the Thames, not upon the Chibar, and when he describes the most gaily bedecked woman of his encounter sitting upon a beast of scarlet colour, he does not label it materialism, or intellectualism, or Bolshevism, or any other "ism" and go forth shouting it a menace to the welfare of the world and the happiness of its people. If he hates vulgarity he does not mention it; if he loathes poverty he does not rant about it; if he despises feebleness and illness he keeps it to himself; if he shudders or weeps when he knows that one of his fellowmen has broken a covenant or transgressed a convention, he does not bellow his pain or publish his disappointment.

Mrs. Minto's flat in the Hornsey road and the occurrences there in the opening chapter of "Coquette" fill one with commiseration for the poor and with pity for the infirm, but Mr. Swinnerton is concerned only in making the reader acquainted with Sally as she comes upon the stage; if he were capable of astonishment, he would marvel that any one was interested in Mrs. Pierce or Mrs. Minto or in the factors that had induced the latter to take the wrong turning. Mr. Swinnerton's distinguishing merit as a writer is his ability to describe persons and conduct so clearly and accurately that they concentrate the reader's interest.

When he trains his telescope on the suburbs as he did in "Shops and Houses" a blur seems to come over the objective and, though he sees the environment distinctly, the less dramatic reactions of human behaviour elude him, and sometimes their distinctive features as well. Neither Louis Vechantor nor his father, who represent the males in the Houses part of this novel, is true to life. If they are, they have eluded previous writers; but then Beckwith is on the South Side of London, adjacent to Kent and Surrey, and Mr. Swinnerton's telescope, despite its power, cannot penetrate the country.

Mr. Swinnerton, still a young man, has written a dozen novels and two critical studies, one of George Gissing, one of R. L. Stevenson. British readers were no longer on their knees before Stevenson in 1914 when Mr. Swinnerton's critical study was published, but their hands were still clasped in reverence. They unclasped them to make a gesture of scorn at the author. But gradually, literary opinion has come to support Mr. Swinnerton: "It is no longer for a serious critic to place him among the great writers, because in no department of letters—save the boys' book and short stories—has he written work of first class importance . . . what remains to us apart from a fragment, a handful of tales, and two boys' books (for 'Kidnapped' although finely romantic, was addressed to boys, and still appeals to the boy in us) is a series of fine scenes—

FRANK SWINNERTON
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what I have called 'plums'—and the charm of Stevenson's personality."

In the light of Mr. Swinnerton's two books on criticism, which have just been published in this country in revised editions, his remarks on the ethics of a critic are interesting. "Our business is to get out of all history and art what we constructively need—what has a real, original value, and send the rest shuffling into oblivion."

All mystics and sentimentalists have mushy admirers who cannot be shaken off no matter how great their shortcomings are. When Gissing wrote "A Poet at Grass" many took it to reveal the real George Gissing and were blind to the fact that it was an attempt at idealism of an ego in the throes of illness. Mr. Morley Roberts failed signally to convey Gissing as he really was. Mr. Swinnerton has succeeded. "He thought that to be impersonal was to be objective, and as he was very nearly unable to escape from himself and his own preoccupations, he fought a losing fight all through his literary life . . . His strength lies primarily in his analysis of situation, in his portraits of women, and in his resolute defiance of low standards of work."

These two books established Mr. Swinnerton's reputation as a critic, but they and his novels are not the only signs of his talent and industry. He has been for many years "reader" to a firm of successful publishers. Of his works of fiction, two are masterpieces: "Nocturne" with which he "arrived" seven years ago, and his latest, "Young Felix," a chronicle novel with interludes, digressions and excursions, many of them humorous, others philosophical and all of them sane. During the interval, he has done two meritorious novels, "Coquette" and "September." There are undoubtedly many men under forty who have accomplished more than that, but they are geniuses and Mr. Swinnerton is not a genius. He is an artist by nature, a writer by cultivation, an observer and recorder of human behaviour who confines his successful description

of such behaviour largely to the lower middle-class, and he specialises in portraits of women.

"Nocturne" relates an evening's experience of two working girls, Jenny and Emmy Blanchard, and their beaux, Keith, a romantic, well-bred young man, whose past does not bear close scrutiny, and Alf, a cockney bursting with health and self-satisfaction. "Pa" Blanchard had been a strong man, a runner and a cricketer in his youth, but drink had downed him and now he was houseridden and imbecile. Emmy kept the house, while Jenny, three years her junior, the good looks of the family and the roving blade, augmented Pa's pension by her own fluctuating earnings in a millinery shop in the West End.

Mr. Swinnerton lays the thoughts, emotions, ambitions, despairs, jealousies, passions, inhibitions and explosions of these two girls before the reader as a lapidary lays a tray of precious stones before a customer. He does not seek to arouse his sympathy, to prejudice against or in favour of this one or that one; he does not sit in judgment, praise, or pity. Few have been so successful in throwing open the shutters that obscure the human soul from the assiduous peeper or the casual passer; no one has surpassed him in conveying the power of the sex-urge or exceeded him in depicting the inherent rebellion within the human heart against fate and society which seek to deprive the possessor of his or her right to live joyously, contentedly, healthily. But he says nothing about the sex-urge or rebellion. He brings us into the presence of Emmy and Jenny and their admirers, sensitises us to their thoughts and emotions and we "listen in" and observe. The result is a realistic presentation of life as it is lived by five persons whose existence is as important and as interesting to the world as five leaves on an inconspicuous tree in the New Forest. If you are not interested in the thoughts of millinery apprentices; in the yearnings of the lowly born who see the river of life drying before they have opportunity to slake their thirst; in the creative gropings of cockneys seeking their fulfilment

and of romantic youths in search of an analgesic balm for their love wounds; if you are not attracted by the sputter of the human candle as it strives to consume every atom of carbon before time snuffs it out; if you are not diverted by observing the sap ascend in the human tree and in the budding, flowering and falling that constitute the human cycle—then "Nocturne" will not appeal to you.

If you are one who has an impulse to rearrange the furniture of every room you enter; who cannot walk through a garden or a park without seeing it advantageously in some other display; who cannot look at Niagara without planning a harness for its energy; who cannot watch the grate without poking the satisfactory fire, you surely will not like "Nocturne." But if you are one of those who can gaze on God's handiwork without impulse to improve it or incentive to moralise about it, "Nocturne" will make a tremendous appeal; if you are a student of the soul, you may turn to "Nocturne" for light; if you are keen to know human reactions you will find perfect descriptions of them there.

In the preface to "Le Livre des Masques" Rémy de Gourmont wrote: "Not only should the work of an author be a reflection of his personality, it should be a magnified reflection as well; the only possible excuse that a man has for writing is to write himself; to unveil to others the sort of world which reflects itself in his own mirror." Young Felix is a reflection of Mr. Swinnerton's personality, of his courage, humour, optimism, sanity. Felix is a sybarite and an egotist; he has never earned the rewards of egotism which lie in the envy and the submission of others but, like Henley's hero, he has an unconquerable soul and he surmounts defective heredity, gnawing poverty, mocking ill-health and almost countless disasters. But life for him was a comedy, not a tragedy, and he had to keep his tongue in his cheek the large part of the time to keep the grin from caricaturing him. "You know, I would have given anything to be one of those people who are an

anxiety to their families. Think of their self-importance! It must make them feel regal, or even criminal. They've got enormous power over the herd. They represent romance—something unstable, uncontrollable—they can't be ignored or forgotten."

Felix is not such a missioner. The keynote to his character and the explanation of some of his accomplishments is to be found in his sex-endowment which was not one hundred per cent masculine. The descriptions of the disasters of his life, which he met with extraordinary cheerfulness and from which he wrought gratification to himself and benefit to others, are the warp and woof of the book.

Mrs. Hunter is the kind of mother many would like to have though they would be willing to dispense with Grumps, her father, a near relative to Mr. Micawber. Grumps was a Scotsman who earned his living by engraving steel and copper plates. He was given to strong drink, but had a sense of humour which caused those dependent upon him to forgive his failings and overlook his infirmities.

Felix got his artistic endowment, his disposition and his comparative indifference to sex-appeals from his mother. On the morning of her wedding day, she awakened in a panic, demanding: "What am I getting married for? I don't want to get married!" We realise that her fear had abundant foundation when we make "Pa's" acquaintance. "Pa" was a bookish kind of man, but he was tender-minded, and in his youth was always referred to by his sisters as "our handsome brother Malcolm." His struggle with the wolf called "want" was so pathetically one-sided that sympathy constantly goes out to him despite an air of self-sufficiency that would have been gall and wormwood to one less tolerant than "Ma."

Mr. Swinnerton has been exceptionally successful with his women in "Young Felix"; they are human beings, not heroines. Estelle and Aunt Julie are true to life. Every one has met or is likely to meet them. Whether they excite admiration or

pity will depend largely upon the reader's point of view. Estelle was selfish, self-centered, sexual. Whether she did anything deliberately or resolutely to keep one or all of these from getting the upper hand is difficult to say from a perusal of Mr. Swinnerton's lines; but that she did not succeed is very evident, for she hastened Ma's death, she deceived Felix soon after she married him, spent his money riotously and left him for a handsomer man who had paid a measure of successful court to her before she married Felix. Aunt Julie is the best delineation of the alteration produced in personality by intemperate use of alcohol that I know in non-medical literature, even though she lacks completeness. Mr. Swinnerton does not say that Aunt Julie drinks, but he has submitted sufficient evidence for me to make such diagnosis without the slightest fear of contradiction. Many people think alcohol produces only hilarity, bad temper, stupidity, irritability or gross structural disorders such as are revealed in mental and physical disease. In reality, the characteristic change which the intemperate use of alcohol produces is personality alteration so insidious in its development and so paradoxical in its display that it rarely is interpreted correctly, at least not until the alteration has become profound. It is responsible for domestic, social, professional, occupational tragedies. They may diminish in this country in the course of time if all the States elect Pinchots as Governors but so far, after nearly ten years of experience of prohibition, they seem to be on the increase.

With "Young Felix" Mr. Swinnerton got the wheels of his literary chariot out of the rut into which they had been rolling in "Coquette" and "The Three Lovers," and in it he has carried impressionism in fiction to a degree that approximates perfection. From the point of view of form, it leaves something to be desired, but many unfinished pictures are pleasanter to look at or more profitable to study than finished ones.

I have always considered it good fortune that "The Happy Family" introduced me to Mr. Swinnerton. He had then three

novels to his credit: "The Merry Heart," "The Young Idea," and "The Casement." Had I begun with "The Merry Heart" perhaps I should never have gone on reading his novels one after the other as they appeared and recommending them to patients and friends. When I read it I was sorry. Locritus junior is the type of young man I dislike for he is the embryo of a holier-than-thou and the pattern of a smart Aleck, and Locritus senior I thought was just a plain fool as well as a disguised Earl, and his suffragist wife was condign but not adequate punishment.

The interest of the book for me is that it shows Mr. Swinnerton had far more comprehensive insight of the feminine heart, even then than of the masculine. Kitty, Margaret and Fanny are flesh and blood creations, not animate wooden Indians like Mallows and Mr. Frederick. I readily understand why his later novels were plotless. The first has been the awful example. I have heard that Mr. Swinnerton enjoyed writing his first novel immensely. It would be interesting to know why.

"The Happy Family" would have been a greater success had he speeded up the action; it drags in places sometimes painfully, but it is a novel well worth reading. Viola is a real character. She is the prototype of Mr. Swinnerton's vampire, and she reappears in one form or another in all his books. There are many Descendants of Empusa. Mr. Swinnerton does not know them all, but he has known several varieties, many of them like Cherry, attractive.

The book gives a picture of the publishing trade in London and of the personnel of a successful publisher, which is probably true to life. We seem to have met in the flesh the managing director, Mr. Cadman, and the disagreeable bounder, Mr. Joyce. In his earlier novels Mr. Swinnerton often stumbles lamentably in his conversations; for instance, much of the conversation between Roger and his sister is stilted, stupid and unnatural. It is possible that well-balanced, educated

young business men ejaculate when a cuff button eludes them: "Oh, where is that most filthy and distressful cuff link?" But the individual who thus delivers himself should be carefully watched for the more striking manifestations of schizophrenia.

The happy family is Jerrard Amerson, a self-made man; his wife, a self-spoiled woman, and their five children, Tom, Grace, Teddy, Mabel and Mary. The children are as they should be, but often are not, composites of their parents. Tom has his father's thrift, his mother's selfishness; Grace, her father's coldness, her mother's egotism; Teddy, his father's pride and his mother's shiftiness; Mabel, her father's contempt for her mother and her mother's indifference for her father. Mary was the "lamb" of the family; she inherited her mother's infantilism and her father's integrity. She is the heroine of the story and Roger Dennett crosses her path early in life. Roger isn't quite a cad, a prig, a snob, but he narrowly escaped being all of them and more. He is one of those insufferable beings who is better than those with whom he is thrown; who knows a little more than those he encounters; who is always patronising to his equals and inferiors, and though not redolent of virtue he exudes it when tapped. He is the third edition of Locritus junior in which some of the mistakes have been corrected.

It is love at first sight with Mary, though she is but a child; love that nourishes itself for years on nothing. When she grows up she displays a quality common to all infantile adults. In the phraseology of the day it is called masochism. She enjoys being tramped upon. She wins out finally by the mediation of Roger's tender-minded mother, that is if marrying Roger is winning out. Meanwhile Mabel goes wrong, and Roger without rhyme or reason thrashes Moggerson into a frame of mind favourable to Mabel's appeal for marriage lines and thus goes higher in Mary's esteem; for Mary worships Mabel as much as she despises Grace. In a moment when the impulse to hurt herself was so great she could not

withstand it Mary had plighted her troth to Septimus Bright of shut-in personality and brother to the vampire Viola, who will go any length to capture Roger. Fortunately Septimus is swept out of the way by influenza, and Viola becomes entangled in the meshes of jealousy. There is one thing Roger can not stand: to have Mary abused. "A genuine, unselfish rage was rising in Roger's breast at her mention of Mary; Mary who was a little 'brick,' Mary who was more simple and more modest than any girl in the world." Tender-minded Mary, potentially prolific, unconsciously keen to reproduce her kind, who would come to adult life with the infantile traits and limitations of Dickens's Dora.

"The Happy Family" and "The Three Lovers" are Mr. Swinnerton's least successful efforts. They both contain admirable material and some of the characters, particularly the minor ones (Grace of the former and Amy of the latter) act like persons we have known and react like persons we have imagined. I do not contend that Patricia Quin, the heroine of the latter book, is not true to life. Corporeally and environmentally she may be, but she is not true to life temperamentally, emotionally, psychologically. I assume that Patricia was a Celt, but her conduct denied it. She was too calculating, her head always dominating her heart. Though Harry Greenlees has every quality, somatic and spiritual, that would fire a romantic girl's ardour, (he was handsome, masterful and versed in the *ars amandi,*) he could not storm the citadel of her virtue, for "the impulse to submit was vanquished by something yet more insistent." It would be interesting and illuminating to know what that something was, especially in a Celt! But she does not tell us when she attempts to analyse and explain herself toward the end of the book in a chapter called "Playing With Fire."

"The Three Lovers" simmers down to this: Is it probable that a young girl, romantic, temperamental, pretty and charming, who, while making her way easily and successfully in at-

tractive London Bohemia, incites the first man she encounters to lubricity, the second to lust, the third to love, would react the way Patricia did? I am of the opinion that it is not probable. There may be men in the world like Monty Rosenberg, Harry Greenlees and Edgar Mayne, but none of them has written a Jean Jacques autobiography nor told me the story of his life.

Despite the determination of Mr. Swinnerton to dispense with plot, it plays a part in this novel; considering its small success, his admirers are likely to encourage him in his original determination.

I am never quite sure how Mr. Swinnerton feels about his men, but none of them is sympathetic to me save Felix. I often play a game similar to that popular in certain social circles: if you were not married to your wife or husband, whose wife or husband would you like to be married to? If I had to live with any of Mr. Swinnerton's heroes, which would I choose? It is difficult to say, but Edgar Mayne would be the last.

Save with Alf and young Felix Mr. Swinnerton has not been very fortunate with his male literary children. None of them is what is called by those skilled in the refinements of modern nomenclature a he-man. They are all cast in the same mould. Roger Dennett is Louis Vechantor in tweeds, Edgar Mayne before he grew up, Gaga before he got ill. For centuries, all equestrian statues were modelled after the Colleone. Mr. Swinnerton would be wise to smash his mould and model a few cavemen, not for presentation or preservation but for practice.

"On the Staircase" is a study of temperament. It reveals careful reflection and close observation of humanity, its reactions, its fears, its clamours. Throughout the book there is an atmosphere of poetry, of beauty, of sentiment and the author was so engrossed in them he forgot to put in humour, a conspicuous feature of most of his books. Adrian Velan-

court, a morbid, selfish, attractive young man, marries Cissie, the daughter of his housekeeper, wrecks their household, then commits suicide. Barbara Gretton with whom he falls in love after his marriage is the least real of the characters. Her personality is left to the reader's imagination, aided by her conversations. Amberly is an improved edition of Roger Dennett; life for him is "a checkerboard of nights and days;" his mind is balanced, intuitive, and he does not set any store on love, sentiment, dream, imagination and that sort of thing. Life is a serious matter for him but he sees his duty and he does it. One of his duties is to save Velancourt from himself. He shoulders the responsibilities of life as a man should; he never expects anything, never anticipates anything and petty disturbances that annoy others do not bother him a bit. His associates call him "hard and shrewd," "curious," "comical," "a dark horse." He thinks himself none of them. He is simple and immune to self-deception. He never seeks to impose himself upon others, he tries to be natural and to keep his inner self a little apart and in a contemplative state. He is a humourless, holier-than-thou bore, and that most insupportable of all creatures: a superior person, satisfied with his superiority.

"The Chaste Wife" is constructed around the question: Should a husband conceal his past from his wife? Has she the right to sit in judgment if she learns? If the transgression is not repeated, should he expect more than toleration, should he expect understanding as well?

Priscilla Evandine loves her husband, Stephen Moore, who was brought up in poverty and wickedness among drunkards and by drunkards. His ethical standards impeded success as a critic, and he had poor judgment: he confessed his past to his wife. Stephen's story as he relates it to Priscilla is extremely well done; the emotion is tense and it elicits the reader's sympathy; his fault has been slight; it has not been repeated; it happened at a time when both Stephen and Min-

nie felt themselves pariahs, when Stephen was free and when he felt so crushed by life that even a stronger person could not have withstood temptation. Priscilla loves Stephen; she knows his loyalty, his nobility and truthfulness and she would like to continue to like him, to be tender, sweet, gentle, kind. But she cannot accomplish it, she cannot understand; eventually she will understand; she will meet Minnie, and she too will conceal from her husband a disagreeable experience that resulted from an innocent flirtation with Hilary Badoureau. This will make her see Stephen's attitude in a different light and after a heart-to-heart talk with him, understanding will come and with it bliss and happiness. Priscilla was a poorer psychologist than Stephen. Many will join with me in the hope that Mr. Swinnerton got all the tragedy there is in him out of his system with "The Chaste Wife." He is not adapted temperamentally or intellectually for tragedy.

One of Mr. Swinnerton's beliefs is that cats have personalities. It is neither a new nor a rare belief. I am sure that M. Anatole France would claim it for Hamilcar and surer that Miss Agnes Repplier would claim it for Agrippina. Every one will admit it for Moumoutte Chinoise and Moumoutte Blanche, immortalised by Pierre Loti. Many cats of history and of literature display far more personality than Romeo did, though he was a dignified, particular and refined cat who acted like a philosopher, had the manners of a lady, the patronising airs of a butler and the vanities of a débutante. But that is not enough to make a cat interesting, that only makes him tolerable. One has a feeling that the cat in "Young Felix" might measure up to the standard of admission for cats of literature, but we must know a great deal more about him and though Mr. Swinnerton does not make any promises in "Young Felix" he must admit the story is unfinished, and the character of the cat is unrevealed.

In "September" Mr. Swinnerton came very near to introducing us to a real person, Cherry. Though Marian is the heroine

of the book, Cherry is the one who gets the laurel wreath, Cherry "of the blue eyes, without a stain of sin and without a trace of trustfulness, on whose flower-like face was to be read obstinacy, charm and a sort of wanton determination."

Marian, thirty-eight, had endured a childless marriage for fifteen years, when fate threw Nigel Sinclair, twenty-three, with the body of an athlete and the soul of a poet, across her path. It was perfect understanding at first sight, and love as soon as Nigel had finished playing Chopin's exquisite Ballade in A flat, which was an hour after his arrival in her September life. Marian was a self-contained woman, whose apparent self-sufficiency libelled her. Nature had given her the strength and courage to endure her own pain (which began in the vamping of Nigel by Cherry and lasted throughout the spectacle of Cherry's duplicity) and the ability to imagine and soften the distress of others. Hence she understood her husband and sympathised with him when Cherry roused his passion and then dropped him.

It is Mr. Swinnerton's determination to show that the latter years of woman's fertility is not a dangerous age; that though the genesic endowment may be lavish and the urge to its display imperious, it can be ordered and controlled; that sense of fitness, not desire, should determine one's conduct. Undoubtedly there are women such as Marian in the world, but most of them are cloistered, I fancy. They know the safe refuge. In one respect she is like Amberley—too good to be true. However, Marian does not always get what she deserves from her creator. "Marian was too experienced to expect moral standards from young women. It was fear of consequences and of interpretation that kept women to ordinary paths." We must take the author's word for it. So far as the reader can see, Marian had no experience, and it was not fear of consequence that kept her straight, it was sense of fitness; she felt that it wasn't cricket for a woman approach-

ing middle age to seduce or yield to the appeal of a young man, though she realised that the reverse of this is the rule of the jungle, the hovel, the palace, and she underestimated the power of the flapper.

Nigel is the most likely character of the book. Readers should be grateful to Mr. Swinnerton that he did not force upon them information of his life with Cherry after the war. It must have been a series of squalls and tempests with occasional sunbursts when Marian broke through. Fortunately for us the author does not kill any one in "September." Mr. Swinnerton is artistic in nearly everything save murder. In "Coquette" it was wholly unnecessary to kill both the lover and the husband. The life of one would have satisfied the most bloodthirsty reader.

Many years ago I read Leonard Merrick's story, "The Man Who Understood Women." It related a young novelist's joy on reading a reviewer's reference to "the author's knowledge of women," and an experience while composing his second novel which proclaims his abysmal ignorance of women. The reception of the second novel was most flattering, and as usual the author's insight into the mind of woman was pronounced "remarkable."

Although Mr. Swinnerton has written voluminously about women, I am not convinced he understands them. Very likely he subscribes to the statement of a fellow writer: woman was made to be loved, not to be understood. The trouble with his women is that they are not "lovable," judged from their photographs. Men seemed to capitulate when they got within visual range of Patricia Quin; Dorothy Vechantor could be rude, sarcastic and indifferent without jeopardising her chances; Estelle was too unspeakably uxorious before and after marriage; Sally Minto always carried a Hephæstus fetter, invisible and unbreakable, that she could cast upon any one she fancied; and old and young quickly fell under the

spell of Cherry. One male reader cannot see himself loving any of them. They are either too perfect or too faulty.

Mr. Swinnerton's literary career has progressed in a way Germans call *schubenweise*. He has not gone straight for the goal, success. He has yielded to the appeal of attractive detours. "Young Felix" encourages his admirers to believe that he is back on the road that led to "Nocturne," but the road has been reconditioned since he made that successful trip; it is now much more spacious and more ornamented, and gives a larger and better view of what is called Life, with its comedies and tragedies, its squalor and its beauty, its realities and its possibilities. Heretofore, Mr. Swinnerton has seen life as an arena for love, but it is more than that unless life and love are synonymous.

He has done some work of the very first order, and he is likely to do better work. His character and personality are reflected in his writings. He sees straight, thinks straight and goes straight. He is neither reformer nor prophet, neither Nietzschian nor Freudian. Happily for him and fortunately for us he hasn't a trace of the Messianic complex.

XII

READING MATTER FOR INVALIDS AND THE NOVELS OF MRS. MARY WEBB

TO redeem his pledge to the pain-burdened and despondent, to help them put in the weary hours until the sun of hope and health shall arise and make day for them, every side of the physician's resourcefulness is tested. There are few things that test it more searchingly than to provide them diverting reading-matter. The literature that appeals to sick souls is often boring and intolerable to sick bodies. The former want mystery and mysticism, the latter reality and romance. This is not a record of my successes or failures in that direction, nor even a discussion of books for invalids, though either might be instructive and amusing. It is an acknowledgment of my indebtedness to Mrs. Mary Webb, a coadjutor in my professional work who has not rendered a bill, and who I fear has never been adequately compensated.

A few years ago I was asked to observe my colleagues weigh the evidence in an alleged case of typhoid fever. While I was waiting I read "The Golden Arrow" to the patient. It seemed to make her less concerned about their decision. As they were very deliberate I read her "Gone to Earth." Whether it was the slight obfuscation of mind due to the fever, or the whole-hearted way in which the clergyman's mother, Reddin and Hazel seized and engrossed her, that dispelled apprehension and drove out fear, I was unable to decide. But when the doctors concluded three months later that it was not typhoid but tonsils, she had lived in "The House in Dormer Forest" and I had become convinced that there was a woman in England writing fiction who had not had her

deserts, and that thousands in America were denying themselves pleasure in not making her acquaintance.

It is always fascinating to attempt to explain why a deserving writer is not read. It has the same lure as riddle-guessing, puzzle-solving and prophesying. Mrs. Mary Webb has small acquaintance here, and it, I fear, is merely a bowing one; perhaps it is because the promise of her first book has not been redeemed and perhaps it is because she has not been able to put heroic notes in them that novels of the kind she writes should have. If British women novelists had to be counted on the fingers, she would have to be given a finger, but the digit allotted her may soon be appropriated by some one else unless she does something equal to "Golden Arrow" and "Gone to Earth."

Were it not that we are wax in the hands of maxims, as many believe we are in the hands of taboos, we would not profess astonishment on finding that a writer's last books are not so good as the first. Practice does not always make perfect. It has done nothing for Mrs. Webb save to make her more ecstatic, to increase her sensibility to the charm of nature and make her more determined to put it in words. As her prose was from the beginning too ecstatic and her description of nature suggestive of obsession one is forced to admit she has involuted as a novelist rather than developed.

"Gone to Earth" lends itself best to the display of her particular talent. The story gives free play to her nature-rapture —not only in mere descriptions but in the wealth of folk-lore and superstition which she has woven into it and in the temperament and the life of the heroine. Hazel, half-gipsy, and innocent of education and civilisation, is a sort of modern wood-nymph with all the fascination of a romantic, imaginative child's soul in the body of a beautiful young animal. Looked at as a prose idyl rather than as a possible story, it is full of charm for the person who likes that kind of reading. As a human Hazel is about as probable in this age, even in the

most primitive part of rustic England, as Little Red Riding-Hood.

The author has a romantic and almost archaic love of villains and super-good men of the innocuous, spiritless kind. Edward Marston, the young minister, represents the maximum of her art in this line. He marries the artless Hazel with the promise and intention of making a "sister" of her until she herself elects to change her status. Instead, he makes a goddess of her, going after her and taking her back into her high place after the villain Reddin, who is a hunting, sporting squire of forty, has magnetised her into going to him, and even receiving her back a second time after she has returned to Reddin of her own accord, taking her part against all critics, including his congregation and his mother, and even against God.

The conclusion of the story is a really beautiful bit of fancy and pathos. Hazel, whose sympathy had always been most keenly stirred by the sufferings of the dumb creatures for whom she had an almost maternal passion, and whose greatest affection in life had been for her little pet fox, makes her final gesture in a desperate attempt to save the little creature from the hounds of Reddin. Her superstitions fully awakened she believes that the savage animals closing in around her are the "death pack" of the "Black Huntsman" who has been the hovering terror of her childlike mind, and clutching "Foxy" in defiance of the shouts from Edward and Reddin to drop her, she makes a wild dash for the quarry. "For one instant the hunt and the righteous men, Reddin the destroyer, and Edward the saviour, saw her sway, small and dark, before the staring sky. Then, as the pack, with a ferocity of triumph, was flinging itself upon her, she was gone."

Taken as a bit of fancy, as a vehicle for the expression of a poetic imagination associated with the love of nature and of the folk-lore of the country people she describes, "Gone to Earth" has great charm. The plot shows lack of imagina-

tion and of experience, and the characterisation does not invite serious consideration.

"Golden Arrow," Mrs. Webb's first book published in 1916, and the only one of her five novels in the New York Public Library, is a simple study of character development presented through sharply defined contrasts. The four young people whose courtship and early married life form the theme of the story represent four distinct and not rare types. In real life, of course, such clear-cut types of any class are seldom found, but the infinite complexities and gradations of reality spoil fiction, and these four form convincing representatives of fairly common classes.

Deborah and Stephen belong to that order of heroine and hero whom novelists delight to torture into finding their souls and their happiness through a series of self-inflicted and undeserved punishments. Deborah, a normal example of the womanly woman whose sex rests upon a granite foundation of idealism plus whole-hearted devotion, has the misfortune to be sought and won by a man whose unstable temperament knows not the discipline of inhibition, but always gives way to the impulse for immediate expression. In reality, Stephen is a fine sort of man after he has subdued his body and found his soul, but the process is in his case exceptionally trying to those dependent upon or caring for him. The dross must be burned before the gold can be got at, and like most people with an excess of temperament and no philosophy, he starts a general conflagration without consideration of himself or of any one else.

Stephen's instincts are the most important things in the world to him, and his notions the second in importance. Therefore when he desires Deborah he must have her at once, and being a renegade preacher in a brand-new and violent revolt against a superficial and soulless religion he experiences an unreasoning prejudice against the trammels of marriage, and insists upon dispensing with legal formalities. He gains his

way not only with Deborah, but with her parents also only to discover for himself the flaws in his own arrangement. The error is then repaired, at his own suggestion, and a belated ceremony performed, after which life goes on in the little cottage up on the mountain near the Devil's Chair just as before. But the sense of being trammelled increasingly oppresses Stephen, and he realises that it was not marriage that bound him as with fetters but something which was in reality an essential part of himself. Even worse is the growing sense of emptiness of his own life and above all of his own soul, which is a shrine without a God. It comes to be symbolised for him by the empty "Devil's Chair" carved out by nature in the mountain rock. So in an unreasoning fit of revolt against he knows not what, but which he calls life, he makes off to America leaving a note for Deborah asking forgiveness but telling nothing of his plan or destination. His return, when like the Prodigal Son he had come to himself, makes the climax of the book and the wherefore of the story, but it is apt to leave the reader wondering if after all it was not rather like burning up the house to roast the pig. It would look as though two healthy young people, honestly in love and with no tangible obstacles in the way of their adjustment, might have managed their lives without quite such strenuous heroics and heart-breaking cataclysms. Aside from anything else, it is cruelty on the part of the author to the next generation to make a young woman wear herself out with such unnecessary emotions.

Joe and Lily, the other couple, are much nearer to common experience. Joe is compounded of sentimentality and practicality, the best possible ballast for common everyday existence. He is a good example of the drone in the human hive. Lily is one of the superficial, selfish females of the species who are sometimes capable of making fools of men but who, when properly managed, successfully and easily fulfil their destiny as mothers of the world's supply of drones. Lilys cannot stand

idealisation or being held to exacting standards, but spanked a little and petted a little they make good running mates for Joes.

In "The House in Dormer Forest" Mrs. Webb made an obvious effort to make her menu at once more appetizing and more nourishing. Doubtless she had read psychology and had been impressed, perhaps one might say awed, by some of its pronouncements. For instance, in describing Dormer Old House overspread with a spider's web of rules, legends and customs, she is led to say as if it were fact:

"It is the mass-ego that constructs dogmas and laws; for while the individual soul is, if free at all, self-poised, the mass-mind is always uncertain, driven by vague, wandering aims; conscious, in a dim fashion, of its own weakness, it builds round itself a grotesque structure in the everlastingness of which it implicitly believes. When each unit of humanity merges itself in the mass, it loses its bearings and must rely on externals. The whole effect of evolution is to the development of individual souls who will dare to be free of the architecture of crowd-morality."

If this were really done, there would be no law, no order. There are a few, not Bolshevists, who agree, but that scarcely entitles it to be considered a fundamental principle.

Nor is she more convincing in speaking for nature.

"Nature takes no account of man and his curious arts, his weird worships, but remains dark and unresponsive, beetling upon him as he creeps, ant-like from his momentary past to his doubtful future painfully carrying his tiny load of knowledge. But indifference is not hampering, as interference is; therefore those that feel within them the stir of a growing soul prefer the dour laws of earth to the drag of the herd of mankind, and fly from the house of man to the forest, where the emotionless silence always seems to be gathering, as waves mount and swell, to the disclosure of a mystery."

Who knows that nature takes no account of man? I can fancy nature trembling with fear and consternation as she

observes man divine her secrets, one after the other. He has harnessed and driven her lightning; he has listened to the whisperings of her atmosphere so successfully that they have become musical, sonorous and distinct; he has made disdainful air carry, as if proud to do so, objects far heavier than itself; he has liberated the pent-up energy of her scores of substances that seemed to less enlightened man waste- and end-products. If Nature takes no account of man who has accomplished this perhaps she should begin to take account of him.

In fact when Mrs. Webb wanders from fiction to fact she quickly forfeits the reader's confidence.

"Her hair was of an indeterminate brown, and her complexion was ruined by ill-health, due to the perpetual chafing of the wistful mind longing for things not in Dormer."

The wistful mind, in the Freudian sense, has been accused of causing many ills, and likely it can ruin complexions. But speaking with a fuller knowledge of sanity than of skin I deny that

"The more a soul conforms to the sanity of others, the more does it become insane. By continually doing violence to its own laws, it finally loses the power of governing itself."

It would be interesting to have these laws codified.

The scenes, the settings, the characters vary little in Mrs. Webb's books. They are like plays given by the same company in theatres of a country town. The subject also is invariable, but in "The House in Dormer Forest" it is handled as if Mrs. Webb knew more about it than when she wrote "Golden Arrow." Amber's love for Jasper is somewhat unhealthy, but taking her all in all she is the most genuine character in the book. She has neither pulchritude, nor charm, but she has a wealth of love to give and no one will have it,

no one wants it, for her appearance denies amatory wealth and her manner confirms it.

It is strange that so few novelists know what every student in the Academy of the Art of Love is willing to testify, viz., that the divine fire burns more consumingly in ugly, asymmetrical bodies than it does in beautiful ones with curves and rotundities that entice the eye and rob the intellect. The Princess Anangaraga, a casket of beauty and inimitably lovely, had a heart of adamant, so hard that it laughed at all efforts of the flowery-arrowed god to pierce it, and were it not for the more than human resourcefulness of King Suryakanta it would have preserved its virginal frigidity to the end and we would have been deprived of one of the most charming love stories ever written, "A Digit of the Moon."

Ernest is without doubt a portrait and the writer may have known him in the flesh, but his speech and conduct are of her manufacture. In fact, both he and Jasper are "unnatural." Jasper does not convince us that he has the character that stakes its all on denying faith and religion. No doubt many of Mrs. Webb's characters are portraits, and some of them are so well executed that they cling to one's memory like the fanatics of "El Greco." In this book Mrs. Darke and her mother are especially noteworthy, the former in the throes of lust of power, the latter in those of revenge for failures and disappointments:

"Mrs. Velindre was grotesque like her daughter. She had the same close-set black eyes, lined pale face and lined forehead; but her eyes had no expression. If one penetrated them, there seemed to be something stealthy in wait behind them. It was like walking in a lonely wood and becoming aware of something running in and out among the trees, silent, invisible, and gradually being convinced that it was a ghost. There was a ghost hiding in Mrs. Velindre's eyes—a cadaverous, grisly thing which had looked at her out of other people's eyes when she was a child, slowly possessing her in womanhood; finally absorbing her whole personality—eating into it like a

worm into rotten fruit. As she sat, hour after hour, in her high, straight chair, with her white cap and black ringlets, two on each side, this ghost brooded with batlike wings above her failing mind and endowed her with something of awe, something that proclaimed her kin to the ancient gods of vengeance and slaughter. For in her, more than in any other at Dormer, except her daughter, the herd panic, which drives man to be more cruel to his brother than are the wild beasts, held undisputed dominion. As a young woman she had known generous instincts, but now, at eighty, she could have refused without a qualm the request of a dying man, if he disagreed with her religious views. Yet she could scarcely be blamed. She had lived so long by fear and not by love, that her capacity for cruelty had grown in proportion to her capacity for panic.

The book is easy to read, but hard to finish. The reader feels like the traveller in a country whose language he does not understand. It is such a comfort to get into his room in the hotel and talk to himself.

Mrs. Webb's last book, "Seven for a Secret," does not reveal the development which one was entitled to expect from the writer of five novels. Indeed, comparison of it with "Golden Arrow" is unfavourable to it. It might almost be said that steady retrogression marks the course of her five novels, all published within seven years. The same care as to detail and background that marked the first book are to be noted, but one feels that, even more than in that book, the interminable descriptions of scenery have no essential, in fact little vital connection with the theme of the story. Scenery is still an obsession, but it is more of a habit, and less of an inspiration, than in her early work.

"Golden Arrow" left the reader with a certain impatience due to the feeling that the emotional tension which the author had set herself to produce was only sustained by a studied effort to wring out of the given setting and characters more violent reactions than one was justified in expecting from them. This same straining for effort is multiplied many times

in "Seven for a Secret." The result is that instead of heightening the reader's suspense by reserving the why and wherefore of the story until the very last pages, the thread of interest is drawn out very thin, so thin at times as all but to snap with the query as to whether or not the story is worth finishing at all.

Scenery and manners form the strong features of the book, although the author unquestionably wished to make subtle character studies of Gillian and Robert. Gillian is the only child of a prosperous farmer, a widower, and Robert the son of the housekeeper who was in reality the backbone of the farm and guardian to the motherless Gillian. Gillian and Robert are in love with each other, although neither one reveals it to the other. Gillian is painted as rather an airy, fairy type, vaporish and longing for thrills, but no more vain or selfish than many an average petted only child who later rises quite satisfactorily to responsibilities when they come to her. Most of the book is devoted to Gillian's butterfly-like meanderings in search of romance, but nothing happens until Ralph Elmer crosses her path. Elmer keeps a country hotel in the neighbourhood and is comparatively prosperous, a "bad man" with a "past," the exact nature of which is only hinted at until the end of the story. He fancies Gillian's beauty and freshness and determines to appropriate it so far as suits his appetite—and no further, his being a comfortable bachelor existence which he does not intend to disturb. He carries out his plan by dint of temptation in the way of presents and very stereotyped propaganda of fascination which achieve their purpose, although Gillian cares nothing for him but all the while continues to love Robert. When Gillian's father discovers that the man he had been entertaining approvingly as a future son-in-law had other plans for himself, he "reasons" with him so effectively that a marriage is immediately performed and the couple seem to progress without noticeable ups and downs of their own making.

Their serenity is, however, disturbed by Robert and Rwth. Robert is the heroic figure of the book, and he is so far overdrawn as to appear at the end almost in the light of caricature. Believing that Gillian loves Ralph and is happy, he desires nothing better, and he develops an interest in Rwth, Ralph's mute slave girl, part of whose fantastic history is revealed to him by an old countryman. He and Gillian teach Rwth to write, and one day she goes "off her nut" and writes things on the blackboard in Ralph's house which reveal to Robert that she had been married to Ralph. That was Ralph's "past," and when he finds that it is out and he can't put it back in its bag by branding Rwth as crazy and incarcerating her, he shoots her. Robert learns of the shooting and prepares his noble climax. Still under the delusion that Gillian loves Ralph he determines to insure her happiness by taking the blame of the murder on himself and protecting Ralph. So he writes a letter saying that he killed the girl and goes into a troubled sleep.

Now one approaches the last pages of the book and the tangled web must be unravelled quickly and fashioned into a neat lovers' knot for Robert and Gillian. This is the way the author did it. There is the murdered girl not yet found, there is the murderer sleeping peacefully in his house, there is Robert, the super-hero sleeping, but not peacefully, knowing that to-morrow he is to make his vicarious sacrifice to Gillian's happiness, and there is Gillian who can't sleep at all. At least she wakes up with a feeling that something is the matter. Whether it is telepathy or the spirit of the dead girl that wakes her it is not stated. She wakes dreaming a horror dream and looks out of the window and sees a light in Robert's window—an unprecedented occurrence. In a panic lest Robert may be ill she hurries to his room where he is still sleeping, finds the letter he has written and reads it. But Gillian is not misled by any false statement at this stage of the story. She who had never divined that Robert was in love with her, at once

sees through the letter and at once she divines all. She wakes Robert and tells him of her love—and of course they will be happy ever afterwards, because Ralph will be taken as a murderer and besides she was not married to him anyway when Rwth was living.

One hesitates giving up going to a hotel where he has often been because once or twice he got an uncomfortable room and an unwholesome meal. But no one will keep up his patronage if bed and board are always poor, unless there is assurance of fresh furnishings and a new chef.

Mrs. Webb should refurnish, perhaps remodel, her literary house; and her servants have outlived their usefulness.

XIII

APPETIZING FIRST FRUITS

HORTICULTURISTS pretend they are able to say approximately from the growth and appearance of a tree the kind and amount of fruit it will bear. They have a better eye than the literary critic. Even after the critic has had opportunity to see the author in full fruitage and to taste the fruit often he cannot prophesy what he will do in the future. I have been interested to look up some of the reviews of Thomas Hardy's first novel, "Desperate Remedies." None of them sensed his power, and after reading the novel again I cannot say they were lacking in perspicacity or discernment. Mr. Geoffrey Dennis may not be a second Hardy but he has written a remarkable first novel.

One of the English reviewers who hailed it with delight, said: "The one thing in 'Mary Lee' we are quite certain about is that it was written by a woman. No man could have written it any more than 'Wuthering Heights,' whose spirit it resembles." A few days later Mr. Dennis, writing from Geneva, said: "I must lodge a protest. I have many imperfections, moral and intellectual, but I am not a woman, and never was." Mr. Dennis has a sense of humour, and it is revealed in this letter and in "Mary Lee." He might have said that he had carefully read "Father and Son" of Mr. Edmund Gosse, for rarely have fact and fiction been so paralleled.

"Mary Lee" is a clear-cut picture of the spirit of the Plymouth Brethren, in a little Devonshire town, in the latter half of the last century, expressed through the personality of a wholesome, lovable, intelligent little girl, painted with a sure touch under a good north light on a bright day, and with considerable attention to detail even as to background. It

reminds of one of those old cathedral windows which on close inspection present a wealth of detail in scriptural scenes, but viewed at a distance and in certain vague lights give the impression only of a marvellously radiant blue.

Here is realism in the true sense of the term; earnest of belief in an intangible, unseeable world, which permits us to put valuation upon the world that we feel and see; realism that helps us to understand the significance of life: here is truth in realism that may help us to live. Here is the tone that is not the echo of those produced by a master; here is a creation that bears the stamp of individuality. It is far from being a masterpiece, but it bears the unmistakable evidences of being done by a hand capable of acquiring rare craftmanship and by a mind that has vision, wit and ordered thought.

Rampant, instinctive models of modern fiction may be better realism, and therefore better art—they may be. Humans clothed with manners and convictions, even quaint folk, seem more like people we have known. Anyway, they are more like the people we think we resemble.

Individuality—possessions, limitations, capabilities—is an ancestral endowment shaped, in small measure, by environment. Mary, born in the ancient Devonshire town of Tawborough in 1848, had forebears whose qualities singled them out from the mass, and her early environment was dark, dour and dismal. Her mother, whose amatory reflex was high and whose judgment of men was befogged by it, had married a scion of the local nobility. He had led a scandalous life and won a reputation to match it, and at the age of 40 had joined the Plymouth Brethren. This may not have been the first indication of the insanity that overtook him, but his treatment of Mary's mother from the day he married her testified that the psychosis was already far advanced at that time. His wife died three years after her wedding day, and on the morning of the day of her death, she gave birth to a daughter, and shortly

afterward said: "There is a little angel born, I see her in God's cradle. I shall be with her always, though far away. I see . . . the King in His beauty. . . . I behold a land that is very far off."

The dying mother's prophecy was not entirely fulfilled, but Mary grew into a real woman, neither tender-minded like her mother, nor ruthless, cruel and lustful like her father. She was reared in what is called a God-fearing atmosphere by an indulgent, affectionate, timid grandmother, and by a great-aunt, one of the most repellent figures in modern fiction.

"She was a short, stout, stocky, strong-looking woman, yet bent; when walking, bent sometimes almost double. Leaning on her awful stick, she looked the old witch she was. Peaky black cap surmounting beetling black brows and bright black eyes, wrinkled swarthy skin, beaky nose, a hard mouth whiskered like a man's, and a harder chin; feature for feature, she was the witch of the picture books."

"To the left of the chimney-piece, in the big black horsehair chair—the comfortable one, the one with sides and arms—always sat my great-aunt Jael. . . . From this coign of vantage she issued ukases, thundered commands, hurled anathemas and brandished her sceptre—that thorned stick of whose grim and governmental qualities I have the fullest knowledge of any soul (or body) on earth. . . . All her dresses, silk, serge or bombazine, were black. On the night I speak of, an ordinary week-night, she was dressed in her oldest serge. The great Holy Bible on her knees might have been some unholy wizard's tome."

Mary was beholden to the fear and admonition of the Lord interpreted by the Plymouth Brethren. After one has followed her career, prenatal and in the quick; after one has listened to her prayers and interpreted her dreams; after one has accompanied her from her advent on the scene to the climax of the story, i.e., to the perfect fulfilment, or as perfect as human limitations will permit—one lays down the book hoping that possibly the vicious circle has been completed.

After the last hideous distortion of the feminine mind and soul of which the creative fancy was capable, or which the overzealous application of psychoanalysis by the imagination of morbidly introspective women could produce, comes a young author with the temerity to write a first novel around a feminine character so out of date as to be no more unsavoury, sensual or abnormal than nine out of every ten young girls one meets daily in home, drawing-room or office where walk and talk intelligent people of any country or social sphere.

Well may one, not irreverently, say:

> What began best can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once prove accurst.

For if the soul of a little girl is not the best thing God created, it is surely among the things we may believe He has blessed once, and it is a belated comfort to have one novelist's word for it that it is not foredoomed to be cursed by becoming the defiled, repulsive thing Mr. Floyd Dell, Mr. Warner Fabian, Mr. Carl Van Vechten, and so many other writers of to-day would have us believe it is.

Mary Lee is the most real, live little girl I have encountered in modern fiction. The author's view and his method, his way of seeing his subject and of painting his picture, are distinctly those of a masculine artist. Being a man helped him to get a clear perspective—unbiased by mawkish sympathy or personal consciousness of difference—of the inside of a little girl's head. But how he got a model to pause for such a study is a mystery. The market is glutted with models for feminine souls—women galore ready to turn themselves wrong side out for any audience. But not little girls; especially not of the Mary Lee type—normal, reticent, incorrigible idealists.

"Mary Lee's" only rival in recent fiction is "Mary Olivier," not as a book, but as the study of a girl. A sketchy comparison of the two brings out these contrasts:

Mary Olivier was almost undiluted self-revelation. Whenever the author departed from autobiography her art became thin, actually threadbare in the latter part of the story where she sacrificed the whole fabric for the sake of meeting the supposed popular demand, or of filling the psychoanalytic prescription, for a little "sex." Although fairly normal herself, Mary Olivier's environment was so abnormal that her reaction to it necessarily brought much unhealthy colouring into the picture. The story is, furthermore, a close-up view of a certain commonplace slice of life which could be made interesting only by being viewed through the microscope of the psychopathologist.

"Mary Lee," although told in autobiographical form, is undoubtedly pure fiction, and the contrast between the features which are more and those which are less convincing in the picture is not strongly marked. Consequently the effect of the creation as a whole is more even and therefore more convincing than that of "Mary Olivier," in which the heroine's actions are at times so at variance with the general trend of her behaviour as to make one say, "Just here memory failed or was rejected and imagination substituted." Mary Lee is normal, as normal as highly organised, neuropathic, intelligent people come. She is neither a shut-in nor an egocentric individual. There is, happily, no intrusion of psychological or other propaganda. We get the impression that the author is merely telling a story, painting a picture, recounting a bit of local history, which has appealed to him as worthy of interest and perhaps of respect and admiration for some of the characters, and that he wants to make the reader share his interest. While the interest is psychological—the development of a girl's soul—the author has recognised, as we must in real life, and as, alas! too often modern psychologists forget, that her soul cannot be estimated apart from her progenitors, her material surroundings, the habits, actions, thoughts and convictions of herself and of those who touch her daily life.

The leading theme of "Mary Lee" is the rôle of religion in moulding the soul of the heroine and incidentally in stamping the personalities and giving colour and shape to the entire life among which her young ego budded and bloomed. Indeed, it might be said that the actual heroine of the book is Religion as conceived by the sect of Plymouth Brethren, and that Mary Lee is the medium through which the disembodied spirit finds utterance; or, to use another figure, that Religion is the stamp which changes the crude metal of a human being into a coin called Mary Lee.

In her heritage there were the same stanch, and sometimes grim, virtues which the Pilgrim Fathers brought across the Atlantic a few centuries earlier. Where she got the warm, intense, colourful personality longing for expression in love and service—not for possession—is not so clear. Early driven to take refuge within herself by the undemonstrative, uncomprehending, though genuine and self-sacrificing, devotion of a grandmother; and aroused to rebellion by the iron rule of an austere great-aunt—not undemonstrative but superlatively expressed through the language of a walking stick applied to the shoulders of a child (according to biblical injunction)—she found her chief expression in religion and in fantasying until life opened up new vistas for her. Then, being a sensible girl, compounded of good human stuff, watched over by a guardian angel, having that priceless treasure, a worthy ideal, and possessed of not more than seven normal devils, her metal was able to retain its own God-given form, keep the determining stamp of her religion and the delicate tracery of her dreams, through the test fire of experience, and come out of it a gold coin ready to offer its full value of love and service in the market of life. She had no need for "sublimation," for her longings were expressed to herself in day dreams of which she had no cause to be ashamed. Her fantasies were of the healthy kind which strove always to attach themselves to some normal person—healthy for the mind of the dreamer, but nearly

always productive of the tragedy of disillusionment. In short, Mary Lee was an attractive, wholesome child who found herself through religion and day dreaming.

It is, however, to the actual heroine that we must turn for an estimate of the book. Religion, in the form of the Plymouth saints as it stamps itself upon the various personalities, many kinds of metal or clay, and thereby tests the quality of the human stuff of which they are made, is the real thesis of "Mary Lee." Though it dominates the entire tone of the community of saints, not once does it change the essential quality or form of a personality. It only applies the test; proves the material. We find saints honestly believing themselves chosen of God, condemning literature and art, innocent amusement and even exercise, as devices of the devil, and then caught rough-handed in breaking the most generally respected prohibitions of the Decalogue. We find hypocrisy, cruelty, greed, masquerading behind Scripture quotations. But what is more interesting, we find the honest stamp of religion on coins of many metal: Aunt Jael venting her own venom in floggings which she devoutly believes are administered for the good of the child under the sanction of Providence; grandmother narrow of mind but big of soul, and Mary Lee, the small child, yielding to temptations with the abandon of a hardened sinner, unable to withstand the flesh and the devil in the shape of stolen French plums and forbidden stories, incorrigible before visions of both Divine wrath and Aunt Jael's stick; and then, after the deed is done, repenting in leisure and in terror. There was no mischief in her world. Each tiny deviation, skip or hop in the straight path was Sin.

The pictures of life at Bear Lawn are as vivid as recent photographs. We go to meeting with the tiny child and follow the wearisome, unæsthetic service and listen to ear-offending hymns:

"Oh, inharmonious howl! Some brother—usually Brother Scholz, who was fancied to possess musical talent—pitched

the key and set the time as he fancied. The latter was always funereally slow, the former more often than not much too high or too low to be persevered with. Not that that mattered. Somebody would merely switch off in another key, anything from a semitone to an octave higher or lower as the case might be, switching part of the way back again if the change proved too drastic. . . . Above all the holy din you could hear Brother Briggs bawling forth his joy in the Lord; higher still the awful metallic howl of Sister Yeo."

We go to school and to play and gradually make, with her, the amazing discovery that all who come outside the sacred company of the saints are branded with sin or sign of unholiness, even the Roman Catholic family to which she goes to be companion in France. We see her developing soul and maturing mind, not renouncing the religion of her childhood, but transmuting it from an early devout terror of Divine wrath to the essence of her spiritual being—the most dependable part of herself.

Perhaps the most remarkable chapter in the book, though not the most interesting, is that called "Prospects," where at the age of eighteen, Mary Lee pauses and makes an analysis of herself, not only her personal and intellectual assets, her accomplishments and her ignorances, but in great detail and with a verisimilitude which makes one for the first time question the sex of the author, the interlacing network of her spirituality, fantasying and superstitions.

It may be objected that the happy adaptation of idealism to reality with which the book closes, leaving the heroine in the early twenties on the point of "marrying and living happily ever after," is untrue to life. It is not, however, inconsistent with the character of the girl, as stanch an idealist as her grandmother was a saint, but also an unconscious pragmatist. Indeed, her ability to adapt actual situations to her advantage is part of her wholesomeness as well as of her intelligence. Even her early suffering at the hand of Aunt Jael became an asset, when, admitted to the companionship of other children,

she found that she could recount them for the diversion of the company and thereby add to her own social prestige. The same aptitude stood her in good stead when she became companion in the French family whose members were engaged in perpetual domestic hostilities. Here, however, one is forced to admit that her wisdom and tact were too mature for her age and previous experience, and her good fortune a little too sudden to be quite convincing.

When, therefore, her idealism of the little boy sweetheart who had been dead for years interferes with her growing love for the real man it seems consistent that her wholesome fancy, in which religion, superstition and idealism lived on the best of terms with each other and with common sense, would find some way of making known to her that the mature sentiments which she had associated with the former had been inspired by the latter, and that the picture of the dream boy had been modeled after the live man. And that is where we leave her.

"The Wife of the Centaur," Mr. Cyril Hume's novel, is to American fiction of 1923 what "Mary Lee" was to English fiction of 1922: the work of a young man destined to great literary success. Mr. Hume tells us of a life we know, or shall know. The effect of his narrative on the reader will depend largely upon the reader's experience. The centaur is every man since time immemorial. The fabulous half-man and half-horse lives in the heart of every child, grows up with him, suffers, struggles and endures. Sometimes he is tamed, but often he wrecks the life of the soul.

Cyril Hume's hero tamed his centaur after a hard struggle, and his merit is the greater because of Jeffrey Dwyer's temperament, inclinations, urges and make-up. As a piece of literature the book has the delicate perfume of youth, it breathes of nature, loveliness, play and emotion, but it has a note of maturity and human understanding which seldom accompanies youth. The author reveals himself a keen observer of human

emotions, and not only does he understand the psychology of the centaur, but he has an uncanny comprehension of the psychology of débutantes, and he has looked knowingly at the feminine mind. He displays commendable literary quality in making the reader share his understanding, and if the book is not the pattern of a masterpiece, it at least achieves a work of art of substantial interest.

If the reader regrets the display of sex-immorality of the present day, if he is astonished that such things exist, if he is reluctant to learn of the goings-on that hurt his ideals, he will turn the last page of the book with a bitter mouth, and deplore the elasticity of the morals of to-day; but he will not forget the beauty that underlies the book, the keen and strongly felt observations of the writer, and should feel grateful to have his ignorance enlightened in so artistic and refined a manner. If his sense of gratitude is developed enough, the danger of the book may be that he will thank our lacerated morals for revealing such an engaging young writer.

It is a little shocking to learn that the acquaintance of a Yale poet and a débutante is begun with the following conversation: "Will you give me this dance?"—"I don't dance." "The hell you don't. Will you come quietly or will I have to make a scene?" His manners were no worse than his language, but apparently it is the day of "caveman stuff" in good society, and we are not astonished to find her a few minutes later sitting on his knee.

The beginning of the book which narrates the precocity of Jeffrey's instinct and experience reminds one of Raymond Radiguet, the French boy-writer who startled the literary world a few months ago with "Le Diable au Corps"; "Wife of the Centaur" develops into a much deeper, much more "real" novel than the former, and does not deal exclusively with the creative urge, but finds interest in literature, poetry, music, beauty, nature and life. Cyril Hume is an in-

CYRIL HUME
Photograph © by *Pirie Mac Donald, New York*

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dulgent writer, and indulgence is probably the most unusual quality of youth, because it is a moderation and therefore opposed to youth. He tells us how Jeffrey Dwyer starts his adolescent life by committing a sin of the flesh, and of the hard, long years that followed when Jeffrey was considered too young to be "blasé" and had to play the part of the innocent boy. All the girls that partly filled his life, later, are real and lovable, especially young Annette and Hope. He finally reaches the climax of his love for Inez, after marrying the girl who loves him most; but the centaur is tamed and he returns to Joan after the hardest struggle of his life.

Most readers may not believe that puritanism in America is so far extirpated that the rising generation will dare conduct themselves as Mr. Hume says they do. The lack of propriety in their manners is appalling and distressing, but it does not strike the reader who is of the world as exaggerated, and the whole book is so substantial, so real, so vivid, so much more a description of facts and sentiment than a work of imagination, that the reader will ask himself if "Freedom and Liberty" is to be the slogan of the rising generation.

Is such an avowal in reality the aim of Mr. Hume? Probably not. His pictures of the looseness of our morals are too attractive and too tempting, in some ways, to bring about a revolt in the hearts of his readers, and that is one of his greatest qualities: he could have preached and been a prig without losing any of the interest of the novel, but he has chosen to amuse the reader, to show him a slice of life as he sees and knows it, avoiding sentimentality, eluding the common boredom or vulgarity that generally accompanies such books, limiting his sensitiveness to worth-while feelings. His characters are not degenerate; they appear normal and sensible, and if they are not representative of the nation they are of the class which, being the most envied and constantly in the limelight, is naturally the most imitated by countless minor individuals

—minor in worldly value—who strive to become one of them, or to be classed as one of them. But what a pity profanity and vulgarity bulk so large in the ejaculations of youth!

Out of the fulness of his mind his pen writes. It is difficult to believe it is not from experience as well, but the publishers protest that this novel is not autobiographical. Jeffrey is described so intimately and convincingly that Mr. Hume must have lived with him and learned about women from him. How else could he know that women are less sensitive, more practical, less romantic, and less remorseful than men? That is not taught at Catholic preparatory schools or at Yale University.

XIV

SOME FRENCH WRITERS OF THE PRESENT DAY

§ 1. Paul Morand

MONSIEUR PAUL MORAND is not only a literary sign of the times in his country, he is a mirror of French mentality. He was more than thirty years old before he published anything and he had been a wanderer in the world. Both his maturity and *wanderlust* are reflected in his writing. He has no morbidity, no desire to shock, little inclination to instruct, but he has an uncontrollable urge to tell what he has thought, seen or done that he may please the reader and promote his own satisfaction.

"Novels are mirrors walking on a road; sometimes they reflect sunlight, sometimes mud puddles," said Stendhal. M. Morand's stories reflect both, but chiefly sunlight. He is a realist of the school of La Bruyère. The first faithful pictures of life that we recognise are to be found in "Les Caractères," published toward the end of the XVIIth century. La Bruyère brushed aside prejudices, denied them imperiousness and wrote of the realities of life in such a way as to entitle him to be called the parent of realism in fiction. It was not until Jean-Jacques Rousseau revealed a new sensibility, that of Nature, that landscape made its appearance in fictional literature. Any one who may think that signs of its disappearance are at hand may readily purge himself of the thought by reading "La Brière," "La Vigne et la Maison," "A la Gloire de la Terre" and numerous others.

Morand's characters, like those of La Bruyère, are human; they talk, eat, drink, come, go and struggle to make money like real folks; they rarely overstep the limits of propriety and

their conduct never transcends that of real life. His first two books of poems, "Lampes à Arc" and "Feuilles de Température," caused a mild sensation in the reading circles of France and gave rise to hopes which have been realised by "Ouvert la Nuit" and "Fermé la Nuit." In addition to being an unusually keen observer, he is possessed of a singularly light and vigorous style and has the ability to paint a picture with fewer strokes of the brush than most of his fellow authors. He reminds one of those crayon artists who do their stunts upon the stage by sketching world characters on a blackboard with photographic accuracy and fidelity. There are few details of life and few activities of the world, few moral or mental tendencies of humanity that his alert mind does not register and his facile pen does not describe.

"Feuilles de Température" is a record of the transition period after the war: a time of disorientation, dissatisfaction, alternating hope and despair. It is an analysis of the feverish disturbance of life, an investigation of the uncertainty of social distinctions, a statement of the conscious or unconscious attempt to put new valuation upon money in the author's country. The book can scarcely be called poetry, though there are rhymes in some of the sketches, like in "Don Juan." In others, rhymes occur here and there, but one gains the impression they happen by chance rather than by design. However, the book is carefully written, with an effort at simplicity which is the most adroit form of affectation.

It is a rare gift to transform into poetry, even though the rhythm be special and anything but classical, the common occurrences of every day life. M. Morand has it. His poems are not about Nature, Beauty, Women, Love or Sentiment, but of stray dogs, begging cripples, business men of doubtful origin and background, stock exchange records, outdoor publicity and trivial activities that have seldom inspired poetry. The book is imbued with the keenest of parisianism, and a touch of *gavroche* with which this clever writer-cartoonist secured the

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approval of his countrymen before he began his series of exotic studies. It requires an intimate knowledge of Paris of the after-war, to feel or respond to some of the author's reactions. The book should be read aloud, even to one's self, for its power lies especially in the combination of sounds. To read it silently is almost as ineffective as trying to read music instead of playing it. It gives an idea of the general tune, and the mind registers the harmony, but the ear misses the charm.

Even now, three years after its publication, "Feuilles de Température" is a true portrait of life. The subway is one of his favourite studies and no one can deny the poetry of "riding above an ocean of blue sparks" until one realises that it is the author's way of describing a trip in the *métropolitain*.

One of the most typical of his poems, typical of what Paul Morand's art is and of what French life has a tendency to become, is entitled "Business":

> 5,000 Dollars
> to who will prove
> that a word can be heard in the factory
> when the round boilers are being forged.
> The chassis fly about, above head;
> the skull bursts
> under the noise of the steam-hammers.
> I love that.
> I direct my day with the speed of the
> aerial railway.
> I invite my friends over the megaphone.
> I eat my lunch standing,
> the stock exchange returns are unrolled on the floor,
> the subway vibrates in my legs.
> I love that.

Paul Morand's art has developed since he wrote "Feuilles de Température," but in no other book has he given the impression of such vivid, bubbling imagination, adapted to his style and mentality. In these thirty-six poems, he acts like the modern diagnostician, indulgent and interested; he takes

the pulse and temperature of his patient, the world, and records its variations and tendencies. He offers a diagnosis but never proposes treatment; in fact, he may be suspected of a determination to watch the disorder or disease display itself.

His early verse revealed the influence of that extraordinary exotic, Max Jacob, who made a stir in Paris with "Cinematoma" and with "La Défense de Tartuffe" in the early years of the generation that is now beginning to involute emotionally and to become mute. It also suggested that M. Morand sometimes called Blaise Cendras, who so successfully adapted cubism to poetry, "Maître."

With Clarisse, Delphine, Aurore, Paul Morand played trump cards and won. Marcel Proust wrote a laudatory preface to "Tendres Stocks." In it, he reviewed the writers of the last century, and those of the present generation. He did it to refute Anatole France that there have been no good writers since the eighteenth century. Proust says there are several but his preface may be interpreted as a panegyric of Baudelaire whom he discusses in detail, throwing here and there a look on the past of literature. "The only criticism that I feel tempted to make of Morand is that he sometimes employs images other than inevitable images." This criticism is light. What seems a little whimsical in his style is not always displeasing, and what seems dangerous to Proust is natural to Morand: he loves speed, a stroke of his pen is substituted for a long discourse, he likes abridged comparisons and makes antipodes touch each other in his vision.

Although Marcel Proust does not see any likeness between Paul Morand and Jean Giraudoux, "Tendres Stocks" has a slight resemblance to "L'Ecole des Indifférents." Morand's English girls offer their hands, smiling, to the selfish and lazy fatalists of Giraudoux. In "Tendres Stocks" the author is still sensitive to his remembrances of college and does not display the cruelty with which he will look back on them, later. The softness of the banks of the Thames surrounds the sil-

houettes of the young girl, of the widow, of the dancer; the whistle of the engines does not make the reader deaf, it only adds a melancholy to the country.

The reader feels that somewhere in his mind he has pictured a woman like Aurore—he has felt pity for a Delphine—he has realised the superiority of Clarisse, but he has not encountered any of them. Those who do not know "Tendres Stocks" have still to discover the charm of dawn in Morand, and the pity, always ironical, which he has not chosen to impart to his nocturnal expeditions; in these two books, he discovered the world, and discovered himself.

In "Ouvert la Nuit" he writes of his adventures with women in his wanderings. They are not love affairs in the true sense of the term. They are occurrences incident to mood and passion. There is no deep sentiment and a cynical and bitter mood stifles and colours all feeling. Love and its ways are viewed with eyes that transmit to the spirit distorted images, and these characters do not stir our hearts. We can look at the Cupid as a clown and smile with the author as he intends we should.

"Ouvert la Nuit" opens with "The Catalan Night" and its most interesting features are the account of political unrest in Catalonia and the flavour of the Spanish Inquisition that pervades the last pages. "The Roman Night" is Roman only in its setting. Rome is as real and as vivid in it as a photographer's painted background, but the heroine, a French moron, is totally devoid of charm and interest.

The vibrations of life's sorrows seem to reach the author's spirit without loss. Love is a farce but sorrow is a reality. It is particularly in "The Turkish Night" and in "Hungarian Night" that the note of sorrow rings clear. The reader is convinced that the latter as well as the "Night of Six Days" are real experiences. It bristles with slang, that extraordinary and breezy argot which requires long association with Parisians to acquire or to understand. The dialogue is picturesque and

vigorous. The best episode in the book is the last, "The Nordic Night." Its portrayal demands all the lightness of touch, the subtility of hues and the adroit fingering of the author: it is a success; alone, it would have made the reputation of the writer, but as a climax to the series that it follows, it places him on the top rung of the ladder. He describes the ethics of the Diana-Bund Society, a return-to-Nature organisation, his shyness when he first appeared among the members of the Society, his eventual enjoyment of their revels, and his own experience with Aino, one of the most ardent champions of the Diana-Bund. She called him a "cochon international," perhaps not inappropriately, although in his preface he says that, in his wanderings "he thought only of French women," which is an avowal of his purely French mentality. He deals with a custom that has been more or less conventionalised in certain communities and especially in some Northern ones of Europe, but the thoughts and sensations of a young man of Gallic inflammability who is suddenly thrust into a Society clad as Adam and Eve were before their fall and his descriptions of the different members of this association are most amusing and entertaining; Aino reacts to normal life and accepted conditions of living, as the author has reacted to the environment of the feminine members of the Society, which causes an unexpected contrast. For some unknown reason this chapter has been left out of the English translation that has appeared in this country.

M. Morand's style in "Ouvert la Nuit" is vivid, full of humour. At one moment, he reminds one of Heine because of the dissonances full of effect, and at another moment of M. Jacob. He is very apt to play a few lyric notes and then interpolate a strain of jazz. He lifts the reader momentarily into the empyrean and then seems to enjoy dropping him into the mud. He is youth testing his strength and suppleness. His humour has a decided acridity and he sees the weaknesses of his characters more than their strengths.

In "Fermé la Nuit" he is a mature development who knows what he can do. If he essays to scale a height, to ford a stream, to breast a gale, he will accomplish it. In four brief stories which constitute the volume, he has expressed, without venom and without pity, the dominant infirmity (which the possessor deluded himself was virtue) of four types of successful modern men.

O'Patah, the Irish Bard and Liberator in "La Nuit de Portofine Kulm," suggests a creation of ancient youth—part monster, part god; part dinosaur, part poet; part savage, part genius; part child, part philosopher. A giant in physical and mental stature and dynamic power, apparently a seer in native wisdom who could not be tutored by example or taught by experience; with the vanity of a tenor stage idol and the bombast of a Tammany chief, he turns out, with the ease of a well-oiled machine, verse full of the human appeal that makes him a poet for the millions; and at the same time he follows the lead of his basic instincts with the naïveté and unconcern of a primitive.

These are stories of men, but the writer takes the pitch, as it were, from the women. Ursula, of the Portofino Kulm episode, is like one of those sketches that a facile artist makes with a dozen strokes of the pencil; not only is it a somatic likeness, it is a soul revelation. M. Morand has a literary technique that recalls Whistler. In the same way that the latter made use of a spot or patch of colour or a tone to lead the observer's eye propitiously on and off his canvases, M. Morand uses a woman. "The Charlottenburg Night" gives M. Morand opportunity to say "things" about the Huns. He says them so adroitly, so politely, so tactfully that a "neutral" scarcely appreciates their sting, their venom, but the German reader would no doubt sense them on first reading.

Only one who knows the mystery of the human heart could have described Denyse of "The Babylon Night," Denyse for whom the young politician would sacrifice an ambition, but

who, poor unfortunate, was forsworn from birth—from countless births—to burn incense to perverted gods. It is a gem and youths who feel the sap of literature rising in their sinews would do well to make it their *vade mecum*.

The closing episode reveals the apogee of M. Morand's art. No writer could parallel "The Putney Night" save Mr. Shaw or Signor Pirandello. In it the author shows an amazing familiarity with beauty parlours and a most extraordinary understanding of the adaptability and versatility of the Levantine: "One of the successes of all of us Orientals," said Habib, "is that the idea of doubting ourselves never enters our heads, and the idea of doubting others is always there."

M. Morand is fond of travelling, sleeping-cars and leather hand-bags; he uses modern machinery like a virtuoso poet who is not quite "fooled" by his own game; he is keen, clever, he has talent and he has written "the right book at the right time," all save "Lewis et Irène," his first novel.

Though M. Grasset, his publisher, is quoted as saying he will stake his reputation that it is a masterpiece one of M. Morand's admirers does not recognise it. Like "Rabevel" it records the colossal success in affairs of the purse and of the heart of a moral imbecile but an intellectual giant, Lewis, who meets his Waterloo in the shape of Irène, a Greek who runs the family bank of Trieste. Up to the time of their encounter in Sicily women have gone down before Lewis like ten pins before a well-rolled ball. This time Lewis falls precipitously, and with a thud, and so they are married and live happily afterward for a few months. Irène feels the call of the blood. She must go back to the bank but Lewis, once *blasé* to the last degree, has found that matrimony has given flaneuring a new flavour. And so they separate matrimonially but go on materially, and out of separation and finance come friendship and mutual respect.

§ 2. Jean Cocteau

Jean Cocteau is a conspicuous figure in a certain literary and artistic set in Paris. It would be intemperate and indiscriminate to say he is one of the most popular of the young French writers, but many of them call him *Maître* as did Raymond Radiguet who died shortly after the success of his youthful effort "Le Diable au Corps." He bows the head whenever the name Oscar Wilde is mentioned and offers up a prayer when he thinks of Marcel Proust. His intimates dwell on his profound sensitiveness and his susceptibility to outside influence. His appearance, mannerism and literary output suggest the *deséquilibré,* but he is a juggler with words, nearly a wizard, indeed. During the war he was called a dadaist, but now his admirers think impressionist is a more fitting designation, and indeed his work would seem to justify the newer name. He studies phrase-making as an orator studies gestures or an actor mimicry. Scores of paragraphs from his first novel, "Le Grand Ecart," could be removed and put in individual setting. They would make a fitting focus for thought and meditation on many aspects of the philosophy of life:

"Vague beliefs made dilettante souls. Dilettantism is a social crime. He (Jacques) believed too much. He could not limit his beliefs and could not precise them. To limit beliefs creates a state of soul as much as a precise and a limited taste in art creates a state of mind."

"The map of our life is so folded that we cannot perceive the one main road which crosses it but only a little new road as the map unfolds itself. We think we are free, but we are not."

"In a circus an imprudent mother lets a Chinese magician put her child in a box. The box is opened, it is empty. It is closed again and then reopened and the child is there. He

goes back to his seat . . . he is not the same child, but no one knows it."

"Germaine dispensed her favours quickly, with the luxury of a florist's bouquet; when it is faded another one is bought. Jacques, on the contrary, was taking root. His abnormal love grew normally, slowly. He loved travels and too many things. Germaine only loved her lover."

The limited public which reads Jean Cocteau regards him as one of the coming writers of France. In fact, he has arrived, and his special mentality and his original way of studying life have made him an outstanding figure. He has never tried to master his "nerves" and he allows his senses and sensitiveness to drift him, fill him with morbid and unnatural thoughts which are depressing but true and quite in keeping with much post-war French literature.

In "Le Grand Ecart" Jean Cocteau depicts the life in Paris of a strange soul, Jacques. In a private boarding school he breathes a morbid and unusual atmosphere. Among his fellow pupils is a young Englishman, Stopwell, champion broad jumper, who has the loyalty and pride of his race, but who is very sensitive to the love bestowed upon him by a sickly, abnormal, effeminate youth nicknamed Petitcopain. (Like Mr. Lawrence, M. Cocteau sometimes gives his characters names that have special significance to those in the know.) Besides the picturesque figure of the professor and of his wife whose care of some of the boys is anything but maternal, the household is completed by an effaced albino and an anemic Arab.

Jacques meets a young actress and becomes her lover. She is receiving constant attention and care from a rich banker, Osiris. One Sunday Jacques and Germaine go to a farm and spend delightful hours in perfect harmony and happiness. Jean Cocteau does not feel much the influence of Nature, the strains of ethereal symphonies are not audible to him, but he has a remarkable gift of precision in details and a keen sense of humour which makes, for instance, the quarrel of the two

lovers over two verses of Victor Hugo a most amusing scene.

Later Jacques' remembrance of the week-end on the farm, the most wholesome memory of his love, is spoiled when he learns that Germaine had spoken to Stopwell before going away with Jacques and had asked him to meet her at a skating rink where she and her companions were frequent visitors. Jacques feels the pangs of jealousy, but decides that he is still holding first place in Germaine's heart, and to convince himself of it, the next day he goes to the little apartment where he met her . . . there she is asleep with Louise, her actress friend. Germaine tells Jacques she has decided to be Stopwell's mistress—but Stopwell wants Jacques to give her up, thus revealing to her a remarkable spirit of gallantry and straightforwardness. Jacques, broken-hearted, suffers again all the agonies that he had experienced before knowing Germaine, a terrible self-doubt, and absorbs a large dose of cocaine to put an end to his sufferings. He nearly dies, feels all the terrors of death, but recovers and goes home for a long convalescence.

When he returns to Paris, with his mother, he is cured, morally. He chances to meet Osiris, who gives him the latest news about Germaine, who has deceived Osiris on all sides, although he does not know it, and Jacques leaves him, his heart full of grief, for he knows that to live in the world, one must follow its fashion: sensitiveness is not in style.

The significance of the title is hidden in the archives where the memories of M. Cocteau's experiences are stored. The *grand écart* means one thing to the Puritan, another to the Parisian, and still something else to the jaded or avid æsthete who haunts Montmartre. If Jacques be taken as a subtle autobiography, the author must suffer inward conflicts which may prove fatal, but they will meanwhile afford a few choice pieces of interest to the modern reader.

Every subject Jean Cocteau touches becomes typical of a

"genre." To use one of his favourite expressions, he is a virtuoso of the pen. His latest book, "Thomas l'Imposteur," a simple *histoire,* is a war story. Another one! Yes, but different; the first that leaves lyric painting and subjective emotionality behind and which, under cover of a vivid, adroit, diverting, sad tale, reveals a synthesis of the monstrous and sublime phenomena of 1914-1918.

Guillaume Thomas, of common but respectable origin, is an impostor. At the age of sixteen he takes the name of a famous general, pretends to be his nephew, dons a uniform, adorns it with stripes, decorations and a Red Cross brassard, and carries a revolver. He escapes punishment and remonstrance by mention of his name: Guillaume Thomas de Fontenoy, adding, in modest tone, "nephew of the General." His lie pushes him into the flood of fatality, and he drags with him Princesse de Bormes, her daughter Henriette and a whole hospital. He finally dies at Nieuport, carrying his secret to his tomb, and causing the death of Henriette who "died two months later of a nervous disease which was not mortal: that is to say, in spite of precautions, she poisoned herself."

M. Cocteau has never done anything better; his style is cursive, sure and ironical and through it vibrates a painful accent, as of an untold misery.

We are not far enough removed from the war to write gaily about certain humorous features it had, or to describe certain amusing and amazing characters that the war threw into relief. Some of them the author sketches with a few strokes of the pen in this book. He says of Princesse de Bormes: "She played life as a virtuoso does a piano and drew from everything a pleasing effect as a master makes mediocre and meritorious music charming. Her duty was to have pleasure. She wanted to play; unlike other women of her *milieu* she understood that pleasure is not to be found in certain things, but in the manner in which one takes them. Such attitude requires a robust health. The princess was over forty years

of age. She had lively eyes in the face of a little girl. . . . She was the personification of purity and nobility. This is what people who thought that purity and nobility are divine objects and that it is sacrilegious to use them as an asset could not understand. . . . She changed the shape of virtue as elegance changes the shape of ill-fitting clothes."

Such pictures suggest Stendhal, but Jean Cocteau is too individualistic and of his time to be compared to any one. His talent is so personal that no master's influence is revealed in it.

"Thomas l'Imposteur" is a sort of parable of the war. The imposture of which Thomas and his friends are victims is, as M. Benjamin Crémieux suggested in the *Nouvelles Littéraires*, the symbolical imposture of the entire war. Thomas is the symbolical image of the epoch between the exaltation of the beginning and the heroism of the end.

The story of the struggle diverts the mind and it touches the heart. The death of the hero is poetic, sober and elliptic:

> "The sailors' cemetery at Nieuport, near the Church, is a boat adrift.
>
> A broken mast is in the centre.
>
> Is it laden with opium, this boat? A heavy sleep has seized the crew.
>
> On each tomb there is a pretty decoration of shell, of pebbles, old andirons, old picture-frames, old bannisters. One of them bears the name of Jacques Roy.
>
> His cross bears the regulation inscription.
>
> But on the cross next to it, one may read: G. T. de Fontenoy. Died for us."

Without presuming to forecast the future of letters, it seems safe to say that future generations will learn more about the French literary tendencies and groping of our age by reading Jean Cocteau's books than many others. The world of letters anticipates a boost from him, and it will be realised if a

careful study of his writings is made. He started with pronounced cubist tendencies, but they were soon transformed into the chaotic revelations of a dadaist. The period during which Jean Cocteau wrote his "Cap de Bonne-Espérance" and some of his "Poëmes" was probably the dividing line in his literary life. His career as a serious writer, his most violent passions appeased and his experimental period ended, dates from that time. "Le Grand Ecart" and "Thomas l'Imposteur" seem to have fulfilled the expectations of his admirers.

§ 3. François Mauriac

It is difficult to imagine two writers more unlike than Paul Morand and François Mauriac. One is concerned with the evolution of the body, the other with the evolution of the soul; one seeks a haven for the flesh, the other for the spirit. "Open All Night" of the former and "The Kiss to the Leper" of the latter have now appeared in English translations and readers who do not follow French fiction in the original have opportunity to contrast two conspicuous trends in that literature.

M. Mauriac is mediæval emotionally, modern intellectually, catholic fundamentally. He believes that behaviour is motivated by designs and aspirations of the flesh and of the spirit, but its final finished display is shaped by divine agency. He is an amateur working in the field of the psychology of religion, but he is a serious student of psychology and he knows how to write.

In one of his early novels, "La Chair et le Sang," the characters were artificial and unreal but one soon became so fascinated with their background, so intrigued with their conflicts, so involved in their engrossing religious and moral problems that he felt as the fly must feel when he gets entangled in the meshes of the spider's web.

May and Edward Dupont-Gunther, accompanied by a house-

keeper who formerly had been simultaneously their governess and M. Gunther's mistress, went to spend the Summer at their recently acquired château. The housekeeper is determined to marry her daughter Edith to M. Dupont-Gunther.

On the farm of the château lives Claude, spiritual, high minded, a peasant youth who has abandoned the Seminary for the soil: better be a good farmer than a poor priest. He is treated by the Dupont-Gunther family as an equal. He falls in love with May, instinctively but innocently kisses her. That kiss forces the flood gates of the reservoirs in which were stored their amatory and genesic potentialities, but Claude, masterful and herculean, pushes his shoulder against them and closes them.

Edith is more concerned to gain Edward's than his father's love. When success crowns her efforts, Edward returns to Paris to get a flat. M. Dupont-Gunther, humiliated and enraged by Edith's choice, discharges her mother. May, meanwhile, accepts an offer of marriage from Marcel, a business associate of her father. He is a bourgeois and a Catholic. The ferment of religion works in her soul, preparing her to accept Catholicism; but it works slowly, so she solicits Claude who is now treated with great formality by her, to instruct her to such effect that it will accomplish the transformation. He accedes and she succeeds.

When Edith gives Edward his *congé* he goes to Châlons to commit suicide, but before doing so, he wishes to give Edith one more chance and he also wants to see Claude whom he has admired. He writes to them both: "If you are not here in five days, I shall disappear." Edith immediately decides to go, but something she wants to do presents itself and she postpones her departure. The old governess who is now earning a precarious living as professional masseuse in Paris says: "If a man killed himself for you, your future is assured."

Comparisons are perhaps as odious in literature as they are in personal application, but it must be admitted that Kather-

ine Mansfield handled this theme with far greater success than M. Mauriac.

In "Le Baiser au Lépreux," he staged a striking drama in a remote corner of the Landes, far removed from reverberations of progress and echoes of modernism, in which two ordinary human beings fought the duel between Christianity and Nietzscheism.

Jean, a potential psychopath, is rich and repulsive. His endowments handicap and harass him. Noémi is poor and pretty and her worldly parents want her to marry Jean. After marriage, they are unhappy. Noémi cannot tolerate the presence of her husband, or stifle the disgust which contact with him engenders. Jean is humiliated and disheartened that he cannot make his wife love him.

He goes to Paris, ostensibly to gather documents for a historical survey he is making, and there feels more than ever the burden of his physical handicap. During his absence, his wife feels remorse and, as absence makes the heart grow fonder, decides to recall him and be a different wife. Thus did she camouflage the real reason: encounter with a young doctor who realised her ideal. Jean returns, senses the situation and to free his wife, exposes himself to tuberculosis and dies. Noémi martyrises him and thus his dream of love comes true, after death, and she achieves perfect peace.

Can novelists be believed? Probably not about such matters. The two protagonists are the victims of a situation as old as humanity, a situation from which people find different ways of escape according to their temperament and the measure of their education and conceit, some with divorce, others with adultery, others with hatred and murder.

It is the ancient tragedy of two hearts whose pulsations are not synchronous: Noémi, beautiful, strong and vigorous, tries to stifle all the natural desires of youth; Jean, physically weak and repulsive, conscious of his inferiority and grotesqueness. She had been his dream, a vague dream which could never

come true. Nature had not made him for the joys of love. Yet the dream had come true and, through marriage, he found himself within the outer gate of paradise for which he was unfit. As a punishment for having disregarded the laws of nature, this paradise is converted into a hell where the myth of Tantalus is renewed at his expense. In this hell, his fleshy heart becomes the prey of the devouring fire of love while his spirit is seized in the ice of an ever-increasing realisation of the feeling of repulsion which he inspires in his beloved one.

The description of the assuaged selfishness of Jean's father, the analysis of Noémi's struggle with the unconquerable feeling of physical repulsion which the intimate contacts of wedded life arouse in her, and of the mental sufferings of the loving husband, are done with great ability. Step by step we follow the progress of the disease which gnaws his soul. And we see him go through it with the consolation of no illusion and of no hope, as a resigned victim who knows the futility even of groaning. In the midst of this torment, his physical being seems to fade in the radiance of his spirit, and his spiritual stature grows to the proportions of a gigantic symbol—the symbol of Man undergoing a complete purification of earthly appetites and selfishness through suffering. When he voluntarily exposes himself to tuberculosis, in order to free Noémi, he climbs his Calvary to the summit of self-sacrifice without a reproach, without a lament. Self-sacrifice, the most beautiful flower of the Spirit that thrives under the dew of tears, in the gardens of Sorrow, is thus the crown of his life. His sublime resignation, Noémi's remorse, are all beautifully rendered. Around that bed of suffering, Noémi has been touched by the grace of God; her eyes had been opened, and she saw what had until then been concealed from her: the light of spiritual beauty radiating from that grotesque and repulsive body from which life was now departing—the immortal beauty of a perfect God-made spirit, the only eternal reality. While the priest is reciting the prayer for the dying "Noémi was contemplating

Jean's features with ardent eyes saying to herself: He was beautiful." What a pity that we so often have to lose our treasures in order to realise their value. After his death, Noémi buried herself in the silence and isolation of three years' mourning and every day "she bent her knees on the stony lid that sealed her husband's grave." The doctor who, in the hope of seeing and winning her had been very assiduous to church, gradually lost his hopes and began to neglect both church and patients and finally took to drink. On one occasion, when chance brought them almost face to face in a secluded spot in the country she ran away before he could see her. She had realised that "her faithfulness to the dead, henceforth, must be her own humble glory."

In "Le Fleuve de Feu," the combatants are Flesh and Faith, Concupiscence and Spirituality. The story is of Gisèle de Plailly, well born, carefully brought-up, over-sexed and of Lucile who was never tempted to sin against her own body. During Gisèle's childhood and early youth she was unconscious of her endowment, nor did it weigh upon her for it mediated the way to the hearts of her teachers, and it focussed the attention of the boys and young men of her town.

She was still an infant when she lost her mother and Lucile, a few years her senior, became her "little mother" in the Convent. She recognised Gisèle's "temperament" and determined to prevent it from swamping her. She essayed to do so by use of her head which deceived Gisèle who attributed her conduct to her heart. Thus did Gisèle clamour for revenge.

Returning one day from the suburban town, where she was in charge of an ambulance, to Paris to get some surgical supplies, Lucile found Gisèle on the staircase of her apartment. Poor Gisèle! She had forged another link in the chain of immortality. She had not been able to horde the capital which Nature had so lavishly poured in her lap; she had disbursed it neither wisely nor well, in one overwhelming encounter. To recover her lost lamb, to invigorate her and make her resistant to temp-

tation, Lucile mothered Gisèle and the baby who was taught to call Lucile "maman" and Gisèle "tante."

When Marie was old enough to travel, Lucile took them to the meccas of the Christians: Rome, Lourdes, Paray-le-Monial. To build on the foundations thus established, she decided to meet Gisèle in a small village in the Pyrenées, which proved to be the *"via crucis"* for both of them. There Fate had deposited Daniel Trasis, a youth of psychopathic heritage and dissipated life who had fled to escape Thérèse. Daniel's mind was tortured by the need of ever-renewed physical pleasures and he reveled in the appeal of purity. He has never appeased his yearning; he has been afraid of the consequences but he has nurtured a cult of virginity. It was bred into his adolescent body by the acquaintance and friendship of a little peasant girl, Marie, whose influence is spread over most of the book. She had become a nun in thanksgiving for Daniel's safe return from the war. The reminiscence of her which came to him often, especially in his disturbed moods, was a moral oasis upon which he rested his miserable mind.

He determines on his first encounter with Gisèle to gain her favour but he will manage the attack so that, instead of killing the bird at one shot, it will be caught in the net prepared for it. They have exchanged no words other than most casual—and yet both feel the same irresistible mutual desire—the magnet and the filings. He delays to swoop down on his willing prey, fearing he will find she is not virginal. The idea tortures him in the same way as the certainty of having committed the unpardonable sin tortures some sick souls. In the long stretches of sleepless nights he cannot identify her; she shrinks and fades. In her stead or in addition to her hypothetical personality, he puts all the young girls he has ever known. Out of them comes kaleidoscopically the picture of Gisèle and with it an irresistible desire to possess her, followed immediately by the question: "Will she disappoint me by the worst of all betrayals—that of being some one else?"

Lucile has the power of giving Gisèle an entirely different background; "as a lighted lamp, brought in, changes the light effect on a face, her presence threw on Gisèle a light in which she appeared different. Daniel, animated only by one desire, had seen in Gisèle only a young girl with a troubled past, but the unknown woman had been able to transform her into another person."

Gisèle evades Lucile's surveillance and in a touching, romantic and mysterious scene begs Daniel to leave the hotel. Two days later Daniel meets the little girl on the lawn, trying to catch butterflies and, during her play, she bursts into a sudden laughter . . . Gisèle's squeaking, rattling laughter. Daniel looks for Gisèle, but sees only the little girl! He knows Gisèle's secret. Had he not always known it? The laughter taught him nothing—he knew it all the time. Daniel is outraged, hurt in his pride, but more stubbornly than ever determined to possess Gisèle. Then he weeps for her lost purity and has no more desire of her.

That afternoon Lucile surprises him in the bedroom of Gisèle. She orders him out and he—with all the crudity of his untrained instinct hurls the truth in her face. Gisèle is the mother of Marie!

Lucile decides to leave the next morning. In the night Gisèle goes to Daniel's room, pushes a letter beneath the door. When Daniel opens the door, she explains—she wished to be sure he would read the letter in the early morning. A conflict possesses Daniel's soul. He wants to let Lucile's holy task of restoring Gisèle to purity accomplish itself, and he wants to realise his own ambition: "It was the delicious and hopeless minute when two souls pretending to themselves that they were still resisting knew that they were irrevocably lost. The chasm had not yet closed on their annealed members—but they had leaned so far into its depths that no force could pull them back—no force on earth nor in heaven."

The journey to Paris gives life to the novel. The train

might be a chapel where consciences are examined, sins recalled, and resolutions taken. Lucile sees again the little Gisèle of the Convent days; she lives over the agonies of fear experienced when she discovered her amatory proclivities. She blames herself for not having remained with Gisèle during her adolescence, but she recalls that her own life had to be decided; her marriage with a man, the image of repulsion, had to be consummated to please God: that she might inflict upon herself the heaviest burden.

The world, the flesh and the devil occupy Gisèle's thoughts. She tries to picture Daniel but his image blends with that of a young soldier. She recalls the days when she used to go to Paris, on some trivial pretext, unconsciously craving love. In the most banal way she made the acquaintance of an Aspirant on leave and despite his commonplaceness he became her Ideal, the only one she was allowed to have. Gisèle humbled, ashamed but unrepentant felt her first sin was nothing compared to the second. Then she was innocent, she was unhappy, she was curious, she was tired and miserable, she was dying for a word of love. But yesterday, how she had thrown herself at Daniel! Why had she been singled out as to be the arena to display a paradoxical reaction?

Her only excuse, at the time of her first fall, was that "sin is not the same in joy as it is in tears." She was in tears then, but now she should have escaped temptation for she was in joy. She resented Lucile's espionage. Why did Lucile insist on living on the banks of the River of Fire when her health, her welfare, her salvation, did not require it? She would go back to Daniel—would he treat her decently?

The chapter of the inward fight in Gisèle's soul is forcefully depicted. The reader can follow the working of her mind in a turmoil that constitutes frenzy and again gets a view of the conflict that takes place in the mind of the author between religion and instinct. Gisèle forgets her own right to be loved —she gives up her search for an ideal love—she only sees her-

self with the keen, fair eye of the Catholic; she sees only her infinite moral failing.

Lucile, at home, falls into reflection. Her religion is the only love in her life—should she condemn Gisèle? Should she be proud that she has followed the straight path all her life, she who has never experienced temptation? Daniel she hates, he has deceived her. She believed he would keep his word and let her perfect the redemption of Gisèle. By his very presence, morally, her plans were crushed . . . she begs God to give her better thoughts about Daniel. "Love thy neighbour as thyself . . ." "Perhaps there does not exist in the world beings entirely pure. No one is absolutely pure . . . there only exists outside of sinners, purified beings." And these thoughts seem to appease her scruples, to soothe her heart. For the first time in her life, she feels the need of affection, to cry on some one's shoulder, to find a shelter and a support—her burden is too heavy!

And then Gisèle comes. It is a rainy afternoon. (One of the many touches that show the appeal that Nature makes to the soul of the author, the need he feels of a perfect communion, at all times, between his characters and their settings.) She tells Lucile she has not seen Daniel . . . perhaps because he has not called her. If he had called the first day, she would have returned to him, but as days went by she suffered less, then she dreaded his call, but now she does not even dread it, so secure does she feel her seat in the chariot of virtue. She has not accomplished this miracle, it has come over her. Suddenly, when her hunger ceased, she heard within a voice, silent until then.

Lucile wonders if she has been wise trusting Gisèle to herself; was it not tempting God? She should have remained near her . . . No, if Lucile had kept her, Gisèle would have escaped. It was not Lucile's presence that had saved her, it was her prayers . . . and Gisèle's confession: what had caused her to fall with Daniel was Lucile's presence. Had

she not been there she would have resisted, but being there, she had the feeling of imprisonment, she felt the need of freedom. She was determined to show that Lucile was not mistress of her life. Excellent behavioristic psychology. The two friends are linked by such strong and unbreakable affection that they forgive each other and Gisèle, under the rain as she had come, but a rain through which one feels the outline of a rainbow, takes the train back to her home, her old father, her deceived love.

Daniel has not forgotten Gisèle. He is in Paris, writing to her every night, knowing that he would destroy the letter in the morning. He makes the most urgent appeals but always in his mind sees Lucile's act of redemption. He hates himself for trying to disturb the wonderful equilibrium of her plans, and he knows also that Gisèle is pure in spite of all: her purity outlives any of her actions, the snow of her purity is stronger than the most ardent of suns!

One afternoon he goes to a café opposite the Gare du Nord and from there he watches the people come and go. He wants Gisèle and he decides to go to her; he will elope with her, take her to the most luxurious places, cover her with jewels and saturate her with pleasures and beauty . . . but as soon as the image of Gisèle in a palace by the sea takes place in his mind, she vanishes; he can only imagine her with the dusty shoes and the blouses she used to wear in the mountains. He takes the train and goes to Gisèle's town. It is full Summer and, once more, Nature is in communion with Daniel's soul . . . burning hot, scorching, filled with both the ardours and wanings of Summer.

Daniel reaches the little church where Mass is being said. Gisèle is playing the organ for the children and, after Mass, when the church is deserted she remains in a state of exaltation and adoration, her face hidden in her hands, her thoughts and soul far away from the world. . . . Daniel waited with the stubbornness of a Fatalist: "If she does not look up within

three minutes, I shall go." She did not look up and he went after crossing himself with the holy water into which he plunged his fingers.

She had purified herself in the love of the Father. She had presented her body in living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God which was her reasonable service.

M. Mauriac, though he quotes from St. John, borrows from St. Paul. He has a certain pleasure in spiritual perishabilities and the lusts of the flesh are the web and woof of his novels. He uses Baudelaire's literary materials, but the finished product does not resemble that of the poet. He has a comprehensive insight of certain temperaments and he knows the dominion and divagation of the genesic instinct. This, joined to a marvellous gift of the concrete, permits him to describe Gisèle's fall in a masterful way.

Logic is his weakness: for instance, the transformation of Gisèle, even though it was effected by supernatural agency, is artificial and impossible. It is without doubt quite possible for a soul to be converted, purified, freed by Grace in a few days, even though it has been violently enraptured of Sin, but how can Daniel, so profoundly attached to Gisèle, give her back to Lucile so easily, without apparent inward fight even though he be anxious to have Lucile accomplish the task to which she has devoted her life, that of bringing Gisèle back to the right path? The author should have described rather than stated the radical changes that took place in Gisèle and Daniel.

The story will be satisfying to those who believe that subjugation of the call of the blood makes for eternal salvation. It will encourage those who have feared that the flesh gained an ascendancy from the war which organised religion finds difficult to overcome, and it will give heart to those who sometimes falter in their struggle with original sin.

Lucile and Daniel are truer to life than Gisèle. There have always been martyrs but they have been few in number, and

martyrdom invariably outrages biological destiny and physiological law. The discernible signs seem to indicate that it is for the welfare of mankind, corporeal and spiritual, to conform to these laws.

M. Mauriac has found in his last novel, "Genitrix," a great subject, morbid mother love. Madame Cazenave has devoted her life to her son Fernand, brought him up like a baby, spoiled him in every conceivable way and instilled in him a hatred of women. Nevertheless he goes regularly to Bordeaux to his *"habitude."* Despite his mother and his mistress, Fernand marries a young governess but soon discovers his mistake.

A few weeks after the return of the bridal couple, Fernand, incapable of facing his mother's antagonism for Mathilde, dominated by her power over him, goes back to his own bedroom, adjacent to his mother's, leaving his wife to spend nights of terror in a remote pavilion. Even when she miscarries and develops a septic infection she has no one to succour or comfort her and she dies, alone and forsaken, while Madame Cazenave urges her son not to cross the vestibule again for "you have already sneezed three times this evening."

In the few hours of her agony, Mathilde has time, in her alternating delirium and lucidity, to review her life and to see with dazzling clarity where and why she has made missteps. M. Mauriac's art is at its highest in this retrospection. Mathilde was a plotter; her early environment convinced her that she knew what an honest man was—her father had been one, and his life had been a failure; she thought she knew what love was—her brother had given her the caricature of it—and Mathilde was determined to be neither honest nor in love. She had the instinct of a mole, "the instinct that made her seek everywhere for an end to her subaltern life. It is the sad part of low conditions that they make us judge human beings according to their usefulness, and that we are only interested in what we can obtain from them."

M. Mauriac has made striking use of Mathilde's illness;

like the ebb and tide of a sea, recollections flood her mind when the fever invades her body, and on its recession, leave her conscious of her present condition. Through the night which precedes her death at early dawn, the night that was only disturbed by the rumbling of the express on the iron bridge, we learn to pity Mathilde, to despise her mother-in-law, to feel the stultifying effect the cotton-wool, with which she surrounded her son's years, had on his development, and it brings to us with vivid accuracy and strict realism, an indelible picture of the mother and son, their make-up, their environment, the power of their heredity, the oddity of their ways and habits.

After Mathilde's death, Madame Cazenave believes that she has won the battle; her beloved son will soon forget the wife he never loved. But she reckoned without fate. Fernand is overwhelmed with remorse for his treatment of Mathilde. He spends a long, dreary night in the room in which she lies, allowing long-suppressed passion to well up within him; slowly, his mind unaccustomed to much thinking, he realises the part Mathilde could have played in his life; morbidly, he enjoys a bitter delight which links him to the cadaver; he repeats to himself, "Blind . . . blind," but he does not realise that he sees his wife's face for the first time, for death had wiped all stigmas from it. He discovers, during that night watch and at the age of fifty, what most men experience in their adolescence. "He who had been incapable of forgetting himself, even in voluptuous pleasures, realised too late that even our body seeks and finds its furtive pleasure, outside itself, when blended with the flesh of another that it makes happy."

Late in the night he is frightened by a noise and he runs back to his mother and to his own bed. Mathilde had seemed to take more ascendency over him as days passed, but now in a gesture full of symbolic significance he forsakes his mother's apartment and goes to sleep in the room and in the bed in

which Mathilde died. Fernand is possessed by the most hopeless of passions, the love for a ghost. Then comes the conflict of love and hatred. Between his living mother and his dead wife, Fernand knows no peace. Madame Cazenave's optimistic reflection that the absent always lose is shattered by Fernand's attitude: "She was beginning to realise that the absent always win; they do not counteract the work of love. If we look back on our life, it seems that we have always been separated from those we love best; it may be because from the moment the adored being lives near us, he becomes less dear to us. Those who are present always lose."

Madame Cazenave dies. Little by little, she resumes the dominion of her son; once more he deserts his wife's bed-room and sleeps in the bed in which his mother died; she triumphs in death, and he is vanquished by her; he will grow old, cared for by the old servant that has put three generations of Cazenaves to their last sleep.

"Genitrix" shows the hand of the master in each detail; all save in the last chapter, where his hand becomes unsteady and though he does not spoil the drawing he mars it. The characters reflect the Garonne Rivet and are immune against outside interference. They live their drama, struggle for happiness, find fulfilment within themselves, as their ancestors did, almost always satisfied to have "only one son in order to perpetuate the thin thread of life carrying till the last day the patrimony continually increased with dowries and heirlooms."

In "Le Baiser au Lépreux" M. Mauriac threw in, as local colour, the characters of Madame Cazenave and of Fernand, sister and nephew of Jérôme Péloueyre. Despite the concentration of the reader's attention on Jean Péloueyre of that story, Fernand and his mother aroused the reader's keen interest. We rejoice that they did not "put it over."

M. Mauriac's masterpiece will be a book of the calibre of "Le Fleuve de Feu," of the tone of "Le Baiser au Lépreux" and of the dramatic relief of "Genitrix."

XV

VICARIOUS SADISM, OR PLEASURE FROM SMASHING LITERARY IDOLS

MR. McCABE, a former priest who forsook the church many years ago and who, since then, has displayed literary versatility and variegated interests, has translated M. Jean Carrère's "Les Mauvais Maîtres." In a foreword he says:

"Carrère is a master of French prose in its purest limpidity, a poet of fine inspiration and rich imagery, a profound student of human nature and of all literature, a prophet of lofty ideals, yet the most patient and indulgent of critics. In other words, he represents a rare combination of the qualities of the literary critic, the journalist, the poet, the moralist, and the humanist; and there could be no more excellent equipment for the work which he accomplishes in this forceful and elegant little volume, of disentangling unhealthy sentiment from exquisite art and charm of personality in the great writers of modern France."

There are seven statements in this paragraph which, I believe, are at variance with fact; at least, I require more than Mr. McCabe's statement and "Les Mauvais Maîtres" before I can accept them.

Every generation witnesses the spectacle of a literary highwayman knocking down a literary banker and robbing him of his gold, or attacking a literary idol and trying to dislodge the laurel from his brow. One Herr Gabriel Sudfield, who preferred to be known as Dr. Max Nordau, did it for the passing generation; M. Carrère does it for the present. He says it has required courage to do it. Why? A few will applaud; some will agree it is a thing that should be done, and there is no punishment save that which has been meted out to him

already; excommunication from the reviews that decree the lot of poets, and he is proud of the distinction.

The task that M. Carrère set himself is "to ascertain which of the great poets and writers of the last century a thoughtful observer may justly blame for the state of intellectual disturbance, of moral listlessness, of public unrest, in which so many of our young men seem to find at once a source of pleasure and a ground of lament."

If he can do this he will get a laurel crown that is far more permanent than the Platonist wreath of flowers that has been denied him.

The bad masters of French literature are Rousseau, Chateaubriand, Balzac, Stendhal, Sand, Musset, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Verlaine and Zola. This is the bill of particulars of M. Carrère's complaint. Gifted with the power to seduce men by the charm and wealth of their imagination and by their skill in weaving harmonious and captivating phrases, they have nevertheless (1) surrendered themselves to all the weaknesses of passion and all the seductions of a life of ease, (2) they have used their talent for the exaltation of mean pleasures and gross desires, (3) they are for those they enchant treasures of weakness, egoism, cowardice, cupidity and (4) they leave all of us with minds overcast and senses quivering.

In the name of the shadows of France's illustrious poets, philosophers, novelists, now beyond the machinations of pettifoggers and the inconveniences caused by notoriety seekers, a barrister unknown to the court of literature enters for them a plea of not guilty, and requests that the indictment be dismissed, as no evidence save trivialities, hearsays, citation of the virtues of others, has been offered in support of the charge. In what way does it tend to substantiate the charges against Rousseau to remind us that Dante is a virile and sunny genius? Dante has had many adjectives hurled at him since Boccaccio set the pace, but it is doubtful if he has ever been called "sunny" before. "Rousseau is a feminine genius, a genius

of the night." There is something occult and mysterious in this. Helen of Troy was, I suppose, a feminine genius. She precipitated the Trojan War. If it had not been for her we should not have had the "Iliad" or the "Odyssey," and perhaps not even James Joyce's "Ulysses." Sappho was a feminine genius, certainly a genius of the night and her crown has been kept fairly well polished nearly three thousand years despite the countless bricks that have been shied at it. At one time she ranked next to Homer, and many think still that her ode to Anactoria has never been surpassed, not even by Dante.

"Rousseau was all uncertainty and wickedness." "All" is rather strong. There was nothing wavering and uncertain in the way he is alleged to have sent the five children born to him and Thérèse le Vasseur to the almshouse. And certainly a weak man would have broken under Thérèse's detestable mother. Moreover, Jean Jacques' father was a wastrel and a drunkard who was alternately violent and foolish. As one has no choice about his forebears he should not be taunted when their defects show in him. Rather he should be commiserated, and his virtues exalted.

M. Carrère has a skunner against individualism. He hurls anathema after anathema after those sacred rights of the individual, and then a brick, his personal and public experience, which purged him of the individualist chimera which he had in youth. Jean Jacques may have been selfish and self-seeking, he may have studied his comfort and his reputation, indeed he may for the moment have put them before the welfare of the world, but from the Social Contract flowed the stream of social and political progress of the past one hundred and fifty years as directly as the Mississippi River flows from Itasca Lake. There are many that contend that it was from the works of Voltaire, Helvetius, Diderot and the Encyclopedists, but many have claimed that the Mississippi River is formed at Gallatin City. The *vox populi* is against them.

Then, for a considerable part of his life Jean Jacques was insane. Think of what he accomplished despite that handicap! What might not he have done had he been as equilibrated as Dante? It is unfortunate that epoch-makers are not descended from eugenists, but up to date none have been. In fact eugenists and genius seem antipathic despite Galton, Pearson, *et al.* It makes for high-grade mediocrity, but eventually the spark may be put in, now that Mr. Karel Capek, the author of "R. U. R.," has succeeded in getting it into his last pair of Robots.

Rousseau was a visionary, and practical men—men who know life as it is—have availed themselves to the profit of all mankind of some of his visions, dreams and conceptions. What Henri Amiel, fellow-Genevan, philosopher and critic, wrote of him after posterity had studied him for a century and had seen many of his theories put in practice is interesting:

"J. J. Rousseau is an ancestor in all things. It was he who founded travel on foot before Töpffer, reverie before *René,* literary botany before George Sand, the worship of nature before Bernardin de Saint Pierre, the democratic theory before the Revolution of 1789, political discussion and theological discussion before Mirabeau and Renan, the science of teaching before Pestalozzi, and Alpine description before De Saussure. He made music the fashion, and created the taste for confessions to the public. He formed a new French style—the close, chastened, passionate, interwoven style we know so well. Nothing, indeed, of Rousseau has been lost, and nobody has had more influence than he upon the French Revolution, for he was the demigod of it, and stands between Necker and Napoléon. Nobody again has had more effect than he upon the nineteenth century, for Byron, Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël and George Sand all descend from him."

Rousseau allowed himself to be mastered by his imagination and his sensations. He had little self-control and less

judgment; he was profoundly egocentric and had a craving for sympathy that was insatiable, but what have those or even countless personality peculiarities and infirmities to do with his work? Are we to concern ourselves now, one hundred and fifty years or thereabouts after his death, with the frailties of his flesh, or shall we judge him from his works and that which has been wrought from his labours? Is literature degenerate because the man or woman who created it is ill or perverse? It would be quite as legitimate to contend that an architect with locomotor ataxia can not make the plan of a cathedral or that Walter Pater could not write chaste English.

This harping on the errors and weaknesses of authors, and maintaining that they constitute an adequate reason for rejecting or disdaining their work, is puerile and absurd.

"Chateaubriand cannot divest himself of his sickly and devouring vanity. It is always himself that he puts on the chief pedestal amidst the crowd of events and men, upon whom he pours his saddened disdain." He didn't have anything on Dickens in the way of vanity or on Napoléon in the way of disdain. Still, no one has yet denied that the former was an inspired novelist, the latter a great general. Chateaubriand was a rhetorician and a poet. He wasn't a pedagogue or a pastor. He was vain, egotistic, professedly self-sufficient, in reality most dependent, as Hortense Allart could and did testify. We are sorry that he had these defects and sorrier for Madame Récamier. But he has not bequeathed his defects. It is his virtues that remain. He was an artist in letters, an heroic representative of the reaction against the ideas of the great Revolution, and the most conspicuous figure in French literature during the first Empire. And he, more than any one else, mediated the transition from the old classical to the modern romantic school. The latter is enough to dislodge him from M. Carrère's esteem, for the romanticists, from Euripides to Zola, from Petronius to Proust, have all been excommunicated by him.

Posterity has treated Rousseau with great consideration, but it is treating Chateaubriand disdainfully. They both wrote the story of their lives and chiefly for the information of posterity. Neither one describes himself with unerring self-knowledge, impartiality and absolute truth, though the former came nearer to it, it is believed, than any of his contemporaries or successors.

The writings of Chateaubriand have had comparatively little vogue in this country, save amongst historians and scholars such as Miss E. K. Armstrong, for example. French critics almost without exception hail him as a master of prose and until comparatively recently they have been loud in their praises of him as a historian. M. Carrère calls him an opulent and noble writer, the prince of French prose, and says that the beauty of his style and the nobleness of his life should have procured indulgence for him. But Sainte Beuve said, "In all his work, he is René," and Rémy de Gourmont, inspired and trustworthy French literary critic of modern time, wrote, "Chateaubriand, above all others, led astray the soul of France in the early years of the nineteenth century."

British critics have taken an entirely different view of the matter. M. F. Gribble, who wrote a book, "Chateaubriand and His Court of Women," shows him to be a plagiarist without shame and Mr. P. F. Willert in a review of "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe" and of several books on Chateaubriand says that, "whenever we have been able to test his statements we have found them to be utterly untrustworthy; all regard for truth is subordinated to the wish to explain and exalt his pessimism and to represent himself as the romantic and exceptional being he believed himself to be." Mr. W. S. Lilly, writing of these memoirs a number of years ago, said: "They are the abstract and brief chronicle of his life and time, by a great genius, who was one of the few honest men then found in French public affairs; their interest is almost inexhaustible; carried on by the magic of his style, one reads and re-reads

pages until one knows them pretty well by heart. Chateaubriand had that prophetic vision which is the prerogative of poets." When critics disagree who shall decide? He was an egocentric who sold his stock too high, and the market has been breaking steadily since his death. In France it is the equivalent of *lèse-majesté* of the old régime to say that Chateaubriand is not a Maître at all, but it may be true.

M. Carrère says that Chateaubriand is profoundly mistaken in trying to make Christianity responsible for modern melancholy. It would have been thoughtful of him had he told us what is responsible. It cannot be the doctrine of the Illuminati, or the teachings of Marx, or the megalomania of Mr. Hohenzollern, or the gesture of Mussolini, or even the colossal experiment being carried on in Russia, but M. Carrère suspects that it is individualism. A fine example we had of it—1914-1918!

M. Carrère deals many knockout blows to nineteenth-century literary giants, but the one of the character that the negro in anger finally handed Carpentier is reserved for Balzac who "by the glamour of his characters and the subtlety of his themes has evoked from the troubled depths of our race that plague of our country and the disgrace of the modern spirit—the parvenu, the careerist."

Seeking spiritual solace in the Casino at Monte Carlo, lazing contemplatively on the sands at Deauville, experimenting with prophylaxis against ennui beneath the awnings of the Café de la Paix, in Paris, listening to metabolic-adjusting music at the Source de la Reine at Aix-les-Bains, I have often conjectured the origin of the parvenu and "wondered" what the forebears of the careerist, with whom these substitutes for earthly paradise are thronged, could have been like. It never occurred to me that the author of the "Comédie Humaine" generated them. Would that he had made his fortune in Sardinia when he went there in 1838 to melt the silver out of the

slag-heaps of Roman mines! The world would have been spared so much bad manners and moral turpitude.

M. Carrère confesses to a certain uneasiness at times—probably when a little below par physically and spiritually—over his strictures on Baudelaire, the poet of sin (but not of vice as frequently alleged), who of all the poets of the last century is the one he loves most. Nevertheless he buckles his armour, brandishes his lance and goes out to get him; not to slay him, for Baudelaire is more of a *man* than the others—including George Sand—but to label him "Bad Master." One of the important charges brought against Rousseau and Chateaubriand concerns their appearance and conduct, but no one has said of them what Anatole France says of Charles Baudelaire: "He grimaced like an old monkey. He affected a sort of dandyism in his person. He took pleasure in displeasing. He prided himself on appearing odious." Among other things that M. Brunetière called him was "the extravagant madman." But he influenced French poetry as no individual ever did before or since, and out of one small book of verse that he wrote has come more inspiration than from all the books of all his contemporaries and descendants.

M. Carrère says, "While he is charming as a poet, as a man, in spite of his defects, he wins from us—by the sincerity of his sorrow and the proud disinterestedness of his life—an irresistible, indestructible sympathy." It is likely that the simple-minded official who was asked by Baudelaire, "Have you ever tasted little children's brains? They are like green walnuts and very good," did not share M. Carrère's opinion. M. Carrère does not give the same sauce to his geese that he does to his ganders.

"All great, virile, robust poets have breathed into us the love of life, depicted for us the victory of will over passion." We refer the writer of these words to a fellow countryman, M. Coué, whose daily-increasing fame is based upon the "dis-

covery" that the will is an enemy to man and his moral and physical rectitude. Imagination is the thing.

M. Carrère did not set out to write an amusing book, but he accomplished it nevertheless. The chapter on Zola attests it. I recall an essay by Mrs. Katherine Fullerton Gerould called "The Personal Touch" which I thought revealed testiness and annoyance on the part of that engaging writer which set forth, "Europe has plenty of vices—it may be more than we, but it does not confuse pajamas with sonnet sequences. It does not call gossip, criticism. It can cross the biggest bridge in the world without wondering whether the engineer who built it had blue eyes, and without feeling somehow imperiled if he happened to eat with his knife." She may be right about their pajama-perspicacity and sonnet-sequence discernment but some of them confound gossip with criticism, M. Carrère for instance. He devotes more than twenty pages to praise of Zola, and to discussion of what are commonly called weaknesses: vanity, childishness, sophisticalness. When he has said and resaid that "Zola was all his life the finest and most complete realisation in the nineteenth century of what a writer ought to be in the midst of the turmoil of social life, and of what he will be in the future. . . ." "He was quickened by one of the most generous geniuses that ever whispered in human brain. . . ." "His work has one merit which surpasses all others and confers upon it a splendour that is perhaps unique amongst the works of the nineteenth century if not of the whole French literature. . . . It is *one*, it is organic," it seems to me contradictory, after ladling out praise of this kind for several pages, on the point of taking leave of him to take out a flesh pencil and write across his forehead "Bad Master," and bad taste to go away mumbling, "Anyway his intelligence was not equal to his genius and his character." One of M. Carrère's delusions is that one may be a genius and have outstanding character and still not be intelligent. He has given a new meaning to intelligence, "It is the power of judging in-

dividuals and people with serenity, to put everything in its proper place, and to be surprised at no accident." The author goes on to lament how few men ever had this marvellous faculty. Men perhaps, but women no. Save for an inclination to leave things lying around they fill the bill admirably, and Cleopatra judged by this description was the most intelligent profane person of history.

"Zola was wanting in breadth of mind." I suppose he showed it in the Dreyfus case and in the Rougon-Macquart series. "No doubt Zola's genius was not based upon that solid classical culture without which even the strongest brain will fail to embrace the whole of humanity." St. Paul, Tolstoi, Walt Whitman, for example!

What does it avail her to have her virtues enumerated, her qualities extolled, her generosities recounted, if the speaker on closing says, "She is a nice woman, but she drinks"?

Zola was bourgeois, vain, sensitive, liked ribands and decorations, ate too much, and probably too fast and was "temperamental," whatever any one may choose to believe that means. But he wrote the Natural and Social History of a Family under the Second Empire which time seems to indicate will become classic, and he preached the Four Gospels: Fecundity, Truth, Work and Justice. Call him "Bad Master" if you must, but the world is saying something about a son of which it is proud.

As was to be expected, the worst of M. Carrère is in his chapter on Verlaine; he is gossipy, malicious, discursive, pietistic and self-satisfied. His formula as a plan of attack is also very well exemplified by this chapter: First praise, then gossip, then vilification.

"Verlaine was dowered with all the gifts of a true poet. Wealth of imagination, a high instinct for rhythm, spontaneous music of word and phrase, the inspiration of the rising period, brilliant lyricism, novelty in metaphors, inexhaustible variety of style, all the colours and all the shades, an eloquence, at times, like that of a Father of the Church and, at other times,

sparkles of Bacchic gaiety, irony and ingenuousness, tenderness and mockery—he had every gift for enthralling both the crowd and the elect." Then come half a dozen pages of malignant, useless gossip of several visits to the sinful poet and his sinister surroundings; then some pietistic mush: "I piously read his works once more and found again lingering on every page and breathing a noxious influence, all the evil with which the man had been tainted, all the evil that had caused his thorough helplessness in his final decay. It is this pernicious fluid, which has perverted and sterilised so many young minds."

M. Carrère's dogmatism is so alluring that I shall try it. Whatever noxious influence M. Carrère finds in Verlaine's poetry he brought to it, and he does not know a mind, young or old, that has been perverted and sterilised by reading Verlaine's poetry, and finally when he says he does, I do not believe him. He is not a "Bad Master"; his work is not noxious; he does not propagate moral cowardice; he does not sap energy, kill hope or annihilate virility. Paul Verlaine was the best example of adult infantilism of all of the world's immortals. He showed that French verse could be written without rhetoric; he divined, not devised poetry; verse came from him with the spontaneity of song from the lark. His soul was not a sealed garden but an open one and men planted weeds and thistles there which finally choked him and he could not murmur:

> This is the weariest woe,
> O heart, of love and hate
> Too weary, not to know
> Why thou hast all this woe.

The bald truth is that M. Carrère, a journalist by profession and an uncompromising champion of criticism in literature, for which he has taste and intimacy, is obsessed, and the obsession now and then displays itself in his conduct. "Bad

Masters" represents one of those "now and then" times. He has had examples, such as M. Lasserre, who in his "Romantisme Français" made out a much stronger case, and he has had imitators, such as M. Léon Daudet, who thinks the nineteenth century should be called the "Stupid Century," but he has no disciples and it is doubtful if any one calls him master save Mr. McCabe.

Having witnessed this Samson of French literature take hold of the chief pillars on which the Parnassian Temple of nineteenth-century literature stood, and having patiently observed him bowing himself with all his might and seeing no dead Philistines about, we are gratified to find that even he did not perish. His concluding chapter on Frédéric Mistral, for whom he has a reverence approaching idolatry, shows that Mistral's "Iphigénie" marks an epoch in French letters. It is a perpetual hail to the rebirth of classical spirit, the Pharos from which comes the kindly light that leads us on. It is "like those kindly aged relatives whom one abandons in hours of disorder, and to whom, as natural guides, one returns when one seems to be on the brink of eternity."

On the whole the translation is good. Here and there are encountered such sentences as, "Since his death, even during life, he gave rise to fierce controversies, not only in literature, but also in the courts," but they are a relief rather than otherwise, for they permit one to smile at the text rather than at the testament. It is when Mr. McCabe attempts translation from the poets whose character is being assailed that he fails lamentably. We are willing to admit that Mr. McCabe knows evolution, astronomy, spiritualism, anything he has written about, but I protest his claim to a knowledge of poetry. How otherwise, could he render Baudelaire's noble lines:

> Le Poéte est semblable au prince des nuées
> Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
> Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
> Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

Not unlike is the poet to the prince of the clouds,
Who disports in the storm and for shafts is too fleet,
From companionship barred, 'midst the jeers of the crowds,
He has wings of a giant and disdains mortal feet.

Baudelaire, the poet that M. Carrère has always loved, said:

"One must be drunk always. Everything is in that; it is the only question. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time that breaks your shoulders, and bows you to the earth, you must intoxicate yourself unceasingly. But with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue—as you please. But intoxicate yourself."

M. Carrère has done it. He has intoxicated himself on classicism, and he has what is known as a "hangover."

XVI

DOCTORS AS MEN OF LETTERS

"KNOWLEDGE of Nature," said Samuel Johnson, "is only half the task of the poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life. His character requires that he estimate the happiness and misery of every condition and trace the changes of the human mind as they are modified by various institutions and accidental influences of climate or custom, from the sprightliness of infancy to the despondence of decrepitude; moreover, he must know many languages and many sciences." Most physicians qualify to this standard. Hence so many of them go into literature in pursuit of bread or happiness, or both.

I was astonished to read in *The Spectator* a short time ago a letter which set forth the writer's amazement that so few doctors are remembered for their imaginary writings. "The literature of medicine seems to have absorbed, like a dry sponge, all the fancy and creative energy of the profession." Francis Thompson and Robert Bridges, Tobias Smollett and Charles Lever, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Mr. W. Somerset Maugham must have been unfamiliar names to the writer of that letter.

Not content with denial the writer proceeds to affirmations equally foundationless: "Among the few doctor-novelists it may be interesting to recall Samuel Warren, author of 'Ten Thousand a Year.'" Warren was not a doctor, though he wrote the "Diary of a Physician"; and so far as can be inferred from what he wrote and what has been written about him, he had few of the attributes of the beloved physician Luke.

Some of the greatest writers of every age and country were

practising physicians, or had had medical training, or had been brought up in a medical atmosphere: Schiller, Goethe, Ibsen, Dostoievsky, Flaubert, and Chekhov for example.

The physician soon learns from experience that it is quite as important, if he is to fulfil himself, that he should know character, as it is that he should know pathology, and he avails himself consciously and unconsciously of the opportunities that his profession richly affords him. Illness, fancied or real, is a powerful dialyser of the unconscious, the dynamo of man's character.

The novelist and the doctor both devote themselves to the study of life, to the plusses of life as well as to its minuses. The novelist is concerned with the psychological details of personality, emotional states and behaviour; the springs of human action must be his incessant study, for his business is to explore human nature and to chart his discoveries, a large part of the physician's life also. Scenery and environment are used as filler and background. When the writer uses the latter lavishly, as does Mrs. Mary Webb for instance, the reader yawns and seeks diversion and instruction elsewhere. When the writer uses fiction for propaganda, as does M. Jean Viollis in his recent book "La Flute d'Un Sou," or for preaching as Mrs. Humphry Ward did in "Robert Elsmere," the reader, desensitised to reform and satisfied with the orthodox source of morality and ethics, is alienated or bored. When the writer merely exhibits facts, draws from them justifiable inference, and sets them forth as convincingly as he can, he is a historian, not a novelist; just as the medical man who elicits physical signs of disease and forecasts their course is a diagnostician, not a doctor.

The successful novelist knows emotions and behaviour from intuition, experience or observation. The doctor, ambitious to go beyond the confines of the country of the Robots in which he is habitually born, must know them intuitively, or he must acquire knowledge of them from observation and ex-

perience. Early in his professional life he learns that man, when sick, is the same as man when well, only he is in a state of obfuscation or fear; and that to be successful in dealing with him while labouring under those handicaps, the doctor must know what man in health is like, and how he reacts.

Hence doctors are omnivorous readers of fiction and of poetry. They go to the novelist and the poet as they go to the clinic and the laboratory to see if the operator or the director has new or improved methods, new ideas or technics. They go to learn how to handle situations that frequently confront them, and which they have not heretofore handled to their own satisfaction, perhaps not to the satisfaction of their clients.

They are sometimes disappointed, but not oftener than when in quest of enlightenment by science. They feel an enduring compensation when they come upon "The Cherry Orchard" or "Entretiens dans le Tumulte" and learn that Chekhov and Duhamel had membership in their guild. They feel a glow of satisfaction that a youthful physician was able to make such use of his medical training and experience as did Mr. Somerset Maugham in "Of Human Bondage." They feel that their powers of observation and capacity for sound deduction have had credible witness when they read of the predicaments and accomplishments of Sherlock Holmes; and their hearts always work in sympathy with their heads, when they accompany Dr. John Brown up Infirmary Street in Edinburgh and encounter "Rab and His Friends."

More members of the medical profession have gained fame —immortality even—in the realm of literature than have the members of any other profession. Certainly John Locke, Sir Thomas Browne, Oliver Goldsmith, Tobias G. Smollett, Erasmus Darwin, John Keats, Charles Lever, Eugène Sue, Johann von Schiller, and scores of others, are known to posterity—not as physicians, but as philosophers, poets, and novelists.

In this country, Benjamin Rush, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and S. Weir Mitchell have permanent places in the worth-

while Hall of Fame—the hearts of their countrymen; and Thomas Dunn English, Frederick Peterson, Pearce Bailey, richly deserve to be called men of letters. Possibly the best example of a man who, in very recent days, achieved nearly equal distinction in medicine and literature was Sir William Osler. His biographical writings, essays and occasional literature may outlive his textbook of medicine, which is now a classic. "The Old Humanities and the New Sciences" is sure to be read and praised by coming generations.

From the time of Rabelais, and of course previous to his day, for then theology, medicine, and literature were not differentiated, some of the distinguished writers of France have also been physicians, for instance, Claude Bernard, Sainte-Beuve, and Charles Richet.

In the latter part of the seventeenth century, there was born at Suave, Languedoc, Jean Astruc, who became a doctor and who sowed discord in the world, but who time has shown was not a false witness that speaketh lies, but a prophet, for he was the founder of the Higher Criticism, that is, a general historical account of the origin and constitution of the Bible, criticisms and views based on substance and matter, as apart from criticism based on the correction and elucidation of the text. At the present time, the movement threatens to submerge us beneath a wave of religious bigotry, the pietistic aftermath of a colossal world-upheaval, and to split the Episcopal Church; but we shall breathe freely again, and that organisation will undoubtedly also survive.

Jean took his degree in medicine at Montpellier, and later became a professor in the faculty there. He was soon called to Toulouse whence, after a few years, he went to Paris. He became physician to Augustin III of Poland in 1729, to Louis XV of France in 1730, and a member of the medical faculty in Paris in 1731. So far as one may gather from his writings, his chief medical interest was in dermatology, which led him to consider the Mosaic laws of the clean and the un-

clean. This was the incentive which led him to the cultivation of the field which he found so fertile.

In 1753 a volume appeared with the following title page:

CONJECTURES
Sur Les
MEMOIRES ORIGINAUX
Dont il paroit que Moyse s'est servi
pour composer le Livre de
la Genèse.
Avec des Remarques, qui appuient ou qui
éclaircissent ces Conjectures.

Avia Pieridum peragro loca, nullius ante' Trita folo

A BRUXELLES
Chez F r i c k , Imprimeur de Sa Majesté,
vis-à-vis l'Eglise de la Madeleine.

M. D. C C LIII
Avec Privilège & Approbation

It bore no author's name. The fear that free thinkers would misuse his work deterred Astruc from publishing it until his seventieth year, and he issued it then only "on the assurance of a man learned and very zealous for religion," who convinced him that "far from being injurious, it could only be helpful to religion," because it would remove or clear up several difficulties which arise in reading the Book, and with the weight of which commentators had always been burdened.

Astruc maintained that he had discovered traces of twelve documents in the Pentateuch, and he permitted himself some guesses as to their authorship. The writers on Higher Criticism that I have consulted say that Astruc's criteria, as far as they went, were valid and his results sound, though incom-

plete, and that they have abundantly justified his really important fundamental theory; that is, that the documents used by the compiler of the Pentateuch have been incorporated so much as they lay before him, that we can get behind the compiler to the earlier sources, and thus push back the origin of much of the Pentateuch beyond the date of its compilation to the earlier date of the sources.

Astruc held to the traditional Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and he considered that it was established beyond possibility of doubt by passages such as John 1:45; 5:46. His judgment, that the peculiar use of the two names for the Deity, "Jehovah" and "Elohim," raises a strong presumption against a verbally inspired authorship, is sound from the standpoint of literary criticism. The quality of Astruc's mind is shown by the ready way in which it fell into accord with the literary activities of his time, which were developing a new form of historical and literary criticism. He caught the drift and made a free and competent use of the new method. All the attempts, even recent, technically elaborate ones, to find an obvious reason for the varied use of these names by a single author have broken down, mostly through their extreme ingenuity. No ordinary trained mind can follow the whole ingeniously elaborate explanations of the advocates of a single authorship, and it is difficult to see how any mind occupied with the great themes of the book could devote itself to such an inferior literary task as weaving these names into the composition in such a merely ingenious way. The result of such a theory is to present us with two types of literary workmanship, constantly intermingled in an unusual and inexplicable fashion. The theory of a single authorship breaks down at the same point as do the efforts to prove the Baconian cipher from the Shakespeare writings. Astruc's acuteness of mind and literary training were sufficient to enable him to see that no theory of a single original composition of the Book would ever be able to give a simple and obvious explanation of its peculiar fea-

tures. He has created an embarrassment for those who hold to an inspired or a Mosaic authorship, from which there seems to be no way of escape.

On the other hand, Astruc displays literary acumen rather than the possession of a well-wrought literary technique. For example, he does not call attention to the discreetness of the paragraph structure, or to the refinement of workmanship within the different paragraphs. These indicate a finished literary craftsmanship which does not go with an original production, or with the idea of a Mosaic compilation. If we could think of Moses as having studiously revised these accounts in old age, after a lifetime of literary artistry, we might credit him with such a production. There is nothing in the story of Moses, or in the literary activities of his time, to support such a view, and it resolves itself into a remote literary possibility, with little probability from the standpoint of either Oriental or Occidental literary history.

It is, in fact, the artificially finished product that is found at the close or during the decadence of a national literature. In this particular it may be compared to the Homeric poems, which in their present form show far too elaborate and studied a workmanship, and too reflective and critical a spirit, to have come intact from a single author, or from the early date to which they were formerly assigned.

The exquisite, and almost poetical, structure of the Book of Genesis gives it a unity of literary form which has done much to produce the illusion of single authorship which has so long persisted. This confusion of unity of structure with single authorship is one of the easiest to make, and hard to combat where there is strong predisposition to maintain the simpler conception of the composition.

It is only fair to Astruc to say that competent critics all maintain that the peculiar literary structure of the Book of Genesis is more obvious in the Hebrew, and that it has become much more apparent since a comparative grammar of Semitic

languages has shown how different Hebrew is from all Indo-European languages, especially in the matter of syntax, and its influence on literary forms. With the development of a literary criticism specially formulated for the appreciation of Hebrew literature, there has come into view a number of standards of literary judgment not readily applied by one familiar only with European literature. All this was beyond the reach of Astruc, who had a trained critical faculty, but not a developed literary technique.

It is not strange that such critics as Eichhorn, working at the same time, should begrudge some of the praise due to Astruc for his liveliness and penetration of mind when he turned to the task of literary appreciation. Astruc deserves great credit for this work of appreciation, and for having first elaborated a point of vital importance for dialectic purposes with such thoroughness and clarity of statement that it has been impossible to overlook its significance in all the later critical work on the authorship of the Hexateuch. There is some similiarity between his relation to the methodical work of Biblical criticism and that of Wallace's work to Darwin in developing the idea of natural selection. On the whole, Astruc was not as near being a competent literary critic as Wallace was to being a competent scientist; but the analogy holds fairly well, and emphasises the point that if the work of the trained critics had not been done, the work of criticism would still have gone on.

There is no note of romance in what we know of Astruc. He talked with crowds and walked with kings—and kept his virtue. He reminds me of a Scotch Covenanter to whom genuine humility is added. He adorned eighteenth-century medicine, but he did not illumine it. The profession honours him because he was a genuine platonist.

Among modern French writers there are many physicians. Most of them were attracted by literature early, and they have not, therefore, like Holmes, Mitchell, and Osler, equal renown

in both professions. Georges Clémenceau, whose fame was achieved in politics, has contributed conspicuously to literature. His "Le Voile du Bonheur" was very successful. Paul Bourget, whose style is original and precise, is a physician; and although he does not practise, there is no medical activity that leaves him indifferent. A number of his books treat of medical subjects, but the most typical is "Le Sens de la Mort."

Jean-Louis Faure, a successful practising surgeon, has published several books. The most important, "L'Ame du Chirurgien," is an ornament to literature. Lucien Graux, although a physician, has bent his efforts toward interrogating the Beyond and has published a number of books on immortality. Dr. Henri de Rothschild, who writes under the name of André Pascal, is a well-known physician, who devotes his leisure to literature. Georges Duhamel is another doctor who has won a definite position in the literary world. A pacifist by conviction, and a romanticist by nature, he has an inexhaustible supply of sympathy and understanding for bodily suffering, as well as for mental pathos. Léon Daudet, the famous royalist leader and author of many books, is also a physician.

Dr. Georges Camuset, whose first collection of poems was published in 1893, was one of the most popular versifiers of France in the nineteenth century. Armand Silvestre said of one of his books: "It will survive many others of greater pretension and more refined art." Georges Camuset was a physician by training, and a satirist and humourist by temperament. He studied medicine at the instigation of one of his masters, though he had made brilliant progress in mathematics and drawing. His failure as a practising physician was highly compensated by his success as a poet. Some of his verses are considered masterpieces, and the books he has had published have assured him enduring fame and reputation. Most of his sonnets, devoted to medical subjects, treat lightly and mock-pleasantly the members of his profession.

When we turn to Germany we find the names of Justinus Kerner, Alfred Meissner, Hermann Lingg and Hermann Landois. Von Volkmann, the surgeon, wrote *"Conte de Fées"* under the name of Richard Leander. All practised medicine to the time of their death. And the best-known representative of Austrian literature, Arthur Schnitzler, followed the profession of medicine for several years.

Since the early days of Christianity physicians in England have been identified with history and with literature. Cynewulf, who lived in the latter part of the seventh century, has a secure place in history; and John of Gaddesden, who wrote "Rosa Anglica," and who practised medicine in London, is an immortal. A number of them, such as Sir Richard Blackmore, Arthur Johnston and Mark Akenside, outlived their day; but we still occasionally hear of the merits of "Creation," "Song of Solomon," "The Silver Shilling," and "Pleasures of the Imagination."

Time is beginning to accord to Sir Thomas Browne the greatest literary fame of any Englishman. Linacre, who earned immortality in another field, enjoyed great repute in his day as a scholar and *littérateur*. But Garth and Arbuthnot are the medical names that are best known in eighteenth century English literature. The famous Kit-Kat Club, to which Garth belonged, brought physicians into close relation with the literature of his time; and Arbuthnot created John Bull, or at least baptised him.

There is no record that Keats ever practised medicine, but he had the degree of Bachelor of Medicine; Smollett practised in London and as a surgeon at sea, but was not successful; and Oliver Goldsmith also received his bachelor's degree in medicine and tried to practise; Richard Blackmore, who wrote "Lorna Doone," studied medicine but did not practise.

To the names of doctors who have achieved distinction in literature in recent times that of Sir Frederick Trieves must be added. After his retirement from the practice of his pro-

fession in the early years of the present century he devoted himself to literature as a recreation and published at least five books of interest to the general public. Some of them, like "The Lake of Geneva" and "Riviera of the Corniche Road," showed considerable research. All of them reveal literary taste and artistic skill.

The triumphal literary arch erected by doctors of modern times is dedicated to a Russian, Anton Chekhov, grandson of a serf, a physician, dramatist and novelist who died of pulmonary tuberculosis in 1904, the year his most widely read composition, "Cherry Orchard," was first produced in Moscow. He began to publish short stories in newspapers and magazines from the time he entered the medical school but it was not until he was awarded the Pushkin prize in 1888 that any one gave much attention to them. From that time until to-day his reputation has steadily grown when it is no exaggeration to say that he is one of the greatest influences that has affected fictional literature in modern times. He practised medicine conscientiously and three hundred and more signed articles, stories and plays testify his diligence in the field of literature. He was in his forty-fifth year when he died. He said of himself: "I have no doubt that the study of medicine has had an important influence upon my literary work; it has enlarged the field of my observation, has enriched me with knowledge the true value of which for me as a writer can only be understood by one who is himself a doctor. It has also had a guiding influence, and it is probably due to my close association with medicine that I have succeeded in avoiding many mistakes. Familiarity with the natural sciences and with scientific methods has always kept me on my guard, and I have always tried, where it was possible, to be consistent with the facts of science, and where it was impossible I have preferred not to write at all."

Chekhov saw his fellowman as he is, neither through a magnifying nor a minifying glass, and he made faithful reproduc-

tion of his reactions, articulate and gesticulate. He knew man's thought and emotion in calm and in stress, and he realised that obsessions often lay hold of him and do to him what the wind often does to the sands of a road. He realised that salvation is man's hope, and frustration his lot. He adored nature, he loved his country, and he understood his people. He was convinced that life and science were advancing harmoniously, and it was as natural for him to describe them in their progress as it was for him to breathe. He described them subjectively and objectively as he lived them and with them and as he saw others do the same; this is the great merit of his work, and this is why his name must always be mentioned when Dostoievsky and Flaubert are being praised.

In truth, the medical profession has supplied its quota of philosophers, historians, essayists, poets, and novelists, and yet the wonder is that more doctors do not write for popular consumption. They have a unique opportunity to see every aspect of life, to witness man's reaction to impulse and environment, to observe him on guard and off, to watch him take the gaffs of life and to scoop in its rewards. I am convinced that many doctors are prevented from doing so by a feeling akin to that of professional secrecy. Despite the popular belief to the contrary, doctors do not talk about their professional experience, or gab their patients' confidences. Seeking enlightenment, or avid of fame, they discuss the former with colleagues; but they conceal the latter from their wives and their valets—at least the best of them do.

It would be to the advantage of the world, its instruction and diversion, if doctors would write more for the laity and narrate their experience in the guise of fiction, if they have scruples which restrain them from setting it forth as fact. They have such unparalleled opportunity for seeing the misery and devastation that follow in the wake of adult infantilism; they realise, as few others can, the stultifying and warping effects upon children of parental selfishness, bigotry, and unen-

lightenment. They are counsellors to the victims of jealousy and to those who are made to suffer from it; they are daily witnesses to the personality-alteration caused by alcohol, and they know its relation to joy and suffering; they know what poverty does and what riches do, and sometimes they marvel which is the greater curse; they know the insatiety of selfishness, and the power of passion; for they cannot deny the evidence of their eyes and ears; they see mothers sap the souls of sons by solicitude and care; they know fathers who wreck their children's lives by not telling them the truth about sex, and particularly that their capacity to create human life is their kinship with God and makes them immortal.

All this the physician knows, and more. But he does not write, because he has neither inclination nor necessity, or because he thinks it isn't cricket. Many, like myself, regret it, I fancy. When I read a novel like "In Cotton Wool," meritorious as it is in its revelation of the spiritual atrophy and corporeal flabbiness that result from parental oversolicitude, I find myself wishing that Mr. W. B. Maxwell had had some education in psychology and physiology. Had Mr. Frank Swinnerton medical training, he could not better understand or more ably depict the emotions and passions, longings and despairs, of Emmy and Jenny Blanchard, in "Nocturne." Perhaps, indeed, he would not have been able to give such an excellent description of the love-making of one of the most insupportable of God's images—the self-satisfied cockney—as he did, in making us acquainted with Alf, though I know nothing in the medical career—neophyte or master stages—that is prejudicial to such capacity. Were he a doctor, or had he a doctor friend with whom he "walked" a hospital—preferably Guy's—the finer shades of personality-alteration caused by intemperate consumption of spirits would not have eluded him as they did when he drew Aunt Julie in "Young Felix."

I am not clamouring for details of disease in novels. They

are often disgusting, even when artistically done, as in "Fille d'Ouessant," by Carlos d'Echevannes, the French writer, who has recently vaulted from philosophy to pruriency. I am asking for consistency, jewel as it is. I am suggesting that the novelist use threads in the weaving of his stories and romances that have been spun by disease, skeined by superstition, coloured by fear, and marketed by selfishness. Should he do so, his work would have more cynosure for the eye, more magnetism for the heart.

I realise, however, that many are not so exacting. Some months ago, a man whose culture I envy and whose accurate and extensive knowledge humbles me, was compelled to rest his tireless body in a hospital. But his mind continued to seek stimulant and sedative. As he knew the song of Circe, and had drunk her wine in many gardens, I could not divert him with the "Odyssey," which I have found the most acceptable solace of the languid hours of convalescence; so I took him "The Voice in the Wilderness," a novel by Richard Blaker, a young Englishman quite unknown in this country. I had read it and admired it, and recall wishing that the author had submitted it to a doctor for revision. I was not keen to know whether the delightful creature who is the hero had spinal or cerebral apoplexy; for I was fairly convinced that no matter which it was, it could not have disoriented him so completely as to make him plan and consummate suicide and murder. A sane man does not kill the child that he has teased from invalidism to health, nor does the reasonable sculptor smash his masterpiece with a sledge.

Charles Petrie had succeeded in bringing about complete transformation in a human being, his wife. She had cast her infantile traits as a snake its skin; she had lost her comfort in invalidism; she had ceased to grow in self-martyrdom; indeed, her last citadel had been abandoned; she was no longer constantly misunderstood. He had inoculated her with a sense of humour; he had restored her self-respect; he had made her a

serviceable spoke in the wheel of life. And then he killed her! No doctor could do that. My hospitalised friend, a lawyer, saw it in another light, and ordered a dozen copies. In some ways he resembles Mr. Petrie.

Novel writers owe it to us not to kill their characters so recklessly, ruthlessly and undiscriminatingly. Some of them I admit deserve to be killed but I have never forgiven Mr. Lee Wilson Dodd for killing Lilia Chenoworth or the way he did it. If authors have to kill their creations they should do it artistically and for personal and public welfare as Mrs. Wharton did it in "Ethan Frome."

I should like to see an accomplished novelist—Mr. Robert Herrick, for example—describe the effects of a small ulcer in the duodenum of the middle-aged father of an interesting family—potentially interesting, at least. I think it would be far more entertaining and illuminating than homely Lilla striving with her gonadal reaction and contending with her hypocrite husband. I have seen misery, suffering, handicap, and non-fulfilment flow from such an ailment in a selfish, obstinate parent, just as I have seen careers wrecked and families made unhappy by importunate mothers and timid fathers unwilling to have their children swim in the tide that would purify them, and buck the wind that would strengthen them.

I should like to come upon a novel in which Philip Carmody's weak arches wreck an entire family, as Mr. Anthime's craving for the night life of Paris wrecks the family of Monsieur des Lourdines, a country gentleman of the Poitou to whom M. Alphonse de Chateaubriant was devoted. I should like to lie on pine boughs in an Adirondack camp, a witness of the simple life there displayed, and read of the disaster wrought by Joanna Godden's sister, swayed by the secretion of other ductless glands than the one that habitually overworks in fiction.

There is a widespread belief, not very well defined or specific, that most of the injury to the social mechanism, most of the trouble and humiliation and pain to the individual, comes from

infraction of the Seventh Commandment. Novelists and preachers are largely responsible for this belief and its dissemination. I am adverse to it. If we put the "insomnia" of the mother, the "indigestion" of the father, the "nerves" of the daughter, and the "weak heart" of the son in one pan of the scales, and adultery in the other, the latter would promptly shoot upward.

It is the ill man that makes most of the mischief in the world, and I hope the Doctors of Literature and the Doctors of Medicine will give him more attention.

What is needed in fiction is the study of individuals who spin the wheel of progress, and not the record, frequently autobiographical, of those who spoke that wheel.

XVII

FEMINISM AND FETID AND FOOLISH LITERATURE

I CANNOT go the whole way with Mr. F. A. Wright, who says in his recent book on "Feminism in Greek Literature" that the Greek world perished from one main cause, a low ideal of womanhood, but that, and one of their high ideals were the two determining factors.

The secret of feminism is its logical outcome. This outcome is the assumption by women of the identical sex standards of men. These standards which man has set up for himself in defiance of religion and convention, and to which he has conformed his conduct without penalty or punishment, save in rare instances, have been condemned by women. One of the strong planks in the platform of woman suffrage has been a protest against them. The impasse which awaits earnest and right-minded suffragists when they become confronted with the ultimate and inevitable destiny of feminism seems to be foreseen by only a few thinking minds that are able to reason their way to it. The procession of pilgrims to the shrine of feminism is still wandering along the pleasant highways bordered on both sides with flowering "rights" to be picked from day to day but with no far vista ahead, no suspicion of the ultimate goal to which the last turn in the road will logically lead, no peep at the features of the veiled goddess enshrined at the end of the pilgrimage.

M. Victor Margueritte, a writer of limited flight-capacity, has bridged the distance, thrown open the shrine, unveiled the goddess and invited the world to look. He has done it in a novel called "La Garçonne" which, when it appeared, caused quite a row in France, and whose translation into English was awaited with some concern. It was stigma-

tised by critics as an attempt at a *"succès de scandale"* and hailed by admirers as a "wonderful study of a certain *milieu* that exists." Incidentally it sold, within a few months of its publication, more than three hundred thousand copies. The English version has the same resemblance to the original as a corpse has to a tight-rope walker.

The book cost its author the Légion d'Honneur. The assigned cause for this decision was an "offence against honour" committed by the writer in the publication of his last work. He is proud of having been rejected from the Legion, he reads with pleasure the document which *"m'honore en me déshonorifiant."* In the preface to a recent book he says: " 'Le Compagnon' is a book of good faith and the natural sequel to previous publications, the logical outcome of my psychological studies of feminine manners."

Whether our method or the French method of expressing disapproval in matters literary and artistic is the more effective advertisement of an author's wares is a matter of opinion. Forfeiture of the most flattering recognition France pays to talent is a high price to pay, for a record sale of copies. Here it is different. We have no "honours" to confer, no punishment for our artists who run amuck. And it remains an open question whether the notoriety of "suppression" or the frank presentation of all the evidence in the case is the best way in which to deal with an author who believes—or affects to believe—that he has a moral to preach, and this moral is based upon a premise with which we may or may not agree and which must, for a long time, at least, of necessity remain a matter of individual opinion. That he has chosen to preach it in a language which every one must agree is an offence to taste and decency is another story—and an old one—and shall not be considered here. The question is solely the moral. This moral forms a part of the argument in the case for feminism. And his thesis is that the winning of the case, even over the route he has sketched, will make for the

highest moral development of women—and consequently of mankind.

"La Garçonne" and "Le Compagnon" are confessedly novels with a purpose. It is therefore rather upon the merits of this purpose than upon their literary quality that they must stand or fall.

Exit the "jeune fille"; enter the "garçonne." She is a product of reconstructed France and—the author would have one believe—one of the types of a reconstructed civilisation. In an introduction to the last edition of the book the explanation is offered that she was not intended as a typical French girl of the period, but only as one kind of after-the-war girl who might exist in any country. The model in the story belongs to "le monde" of Paris to-day, the society of the prosperous, the modern; neither to the Faubourg, nor to the old-time bourgeoisie. Her parents are selfish, hard, but conservative. Her mother, a woman of fifty, spends her life trying to appear thirty. Her father is an inventor whose first consideration in his daughter's marriage "arrangement" is the matter of a business advantage to himself. Monique, at twenty, the reader is told, is an emancipated but instinctively normal young girl. She prefers sports to flirting. Her studies in biology and her social experiences have relieved her of illusions. They have not, however, relieved her of ideals, tainted her tastes, perverted her instincts nor poisoned the hope which springs eternal in the human breast of most normal young girls, i.e., the hope of finding happiness in marriage to a man whom she can honour and trust. She becomes engaged to a man whom she confidently believes to be *the* man, without taking further pause to question his previous or his future plan of life than her unemancipated prototype of a generation past. This is to say that Monique, enlightened, untrammelled, differs in ideals and manners from the *jeune fille* of before-the-war France, but is identical with her in instincts. Marriage is to her no sacrament—what matter a few days more or less? The ceremony

is negligible, or even a public desecration of what should be sacred. But her instinct is monogamous; also credulous.

It may be design on the part of the author to select a woman of this kind upon whom to thrust experiences such as Monique encountered, and, if it was, he has a deeper insight into biology than one would gather from reading his books.

A few days before the date set for the wedding Monique learns, through an anonymous letter first and later through the evidence of her eyes, that her fiancé's scheme of life has not included, and is apparently designed not to include, breaking off relations with a mistress whom Monique sees with him in a restaurant. Her reaction is instantaneous, violent. But is it true to type? This is the axis upon which the moral of M. Margueritte's thesis turns.

Many believe that the normal male rights himself through his experiences. Some consistent feminists demand that the axiom be applied to the normal female. I am ready to grant it. So far I am in accord with M. Margueritte, and this fact simplifies the task of laying all the emphasis upon my one point of difference with him. For Monique is, he says, a normal girl, and the righting of herself through her experiences is the thesis of the story. But are Monique's experiences from this point to the end of the novel either normal or probable? Whether one charges them to her reaction to circumstances, to the working out of her temperament, or to her choice at the psychological moment which determines destiny, it is all the same. Is her reaction, her temperament, her choice, that of a normal girl without previous sex experience, except that of anticipating the normal entailment of marriage by several days? M. Margueritte says it is. I say it is not.

Monique's reaction is revenge. Her revenge is to repay insult with the same coin, or to apply the homeopathic remedy to her outraged self-respect and to her respect for her fiancé, by treating like with like. She accepts Lucien's act as a challenge and determines to "go him one better." And she

does. With a whispered excuse to her mother she leaves her and her dinner party in the restaurant, rushes in a frenzy out into the night, picks up the first man who is attracted by her evident refinement and her unaccompanied state. Her purpose, so far as she has any purpose, seems to be the burning of her bridges with the past as an unanswerable argument to all attempts at reconciliation on the part of her parents or of Lucien—both Lucien and her father being primarily interested in their mutually satisfactory "arrangement" regarding the *dot,* and her mother in getting a marriageable daughter off her hands. She leaves her parents and, having inherited a comfortable fortune from an aunt, devotes several years to exploring the possibilities which Paris offers for a life unrestrained by principles or prejudices.

This is the experience—plus work undertaken for interest rather than profit—through which Monique "rights" herself and eventually finds her soul mate. The book leaves one with the inference that she and the soul mate "lived happily ever after," just as if hers had been a case of Cinderella and the Prince or of any other old-fashioned girl in an old-fashioned story.

Many of the characters in "La Garçonne" reappear in "Le Compagnon." The revenge impulse which Monique mistook for conviction has not endured: she married Georges and bore two children. Unhappy, restless and beaten, she is riddled and absorbed by the glamour and the liberty of the life she forsook, so the author searches the paddock for a winner.

Her name is Annik Raimbert. By training a lawyer, she is physically as independent as Monique, but her emotional balance and her determination are greater and she is more emancipated intellectually. From childhood, she has been trained to see things in proper perspective, and one of the things she has seen was that there are few happy marriages; she has seen matrimony change love into hatred or, worse yet, into resignation; she had reflected on the reason for such trans-

formation of the most sacred sentiment of humanity and her conclusions, facilitated by the precepts of Mademoiselle Hardy, her devoted teacher, were that happiness denied women in marriage is to be found in *unions libres*. To a woman of her morality, fidelity and respectability, such a union should lead to felicity and fulfilment. She is debating the suitability of two "matches." Though Amedée Jacquemin, lawyer and socialist deputy, who wants her for his wife, appeals to her intellectually, her senses seek Pierre Lebeau; Pierre has a "liaison," though—which is soon to be broken, however—and Amedée's freedom is one of his assets, for Annik's intransigent conception of sexual morality, her thirst for loyalty and for equality of rights forbids her to love a man who is not free. M. Victor Margueritte seems, in giving such a make-up to his beloved heroine, to have reckoned without the intangible "something" which creates love. Had he said that Annik would not give vent to her sentiments if they were concentrated upon a man already engaged in another adventure, we might have admired her sacrifice, but to say that such bonds constituted for Annik an impossibility to love—is giving concrete capacity and definite limitations to the one sentiment that ignores them.

Pierre Lebeau behaves disgracefully, ruins the life of Rose, shirks his responsibility when she gives birth, and tries unsuccessfully the same game with Annik who, revolted and disheartened by men's standards of morality, consents to plead the defence of Rose, awaiting trial for child-murder. Meanwhile the modern Portia has become the mistress of Amedée, having convinced him that this arrangement is more sacred and less dictated by human motives than marriage. The experiment is successful; Amedée, though unusually bourgeois in personality, heredity, environment and bringing-up, accepts for love of Annik the verdict of the world, the ostracism of his family, the disdain of his superiors. He admits Annik to his life, unshaken by fear and unafraid of consequences; he sees her,

day by day, absorbing his life and his practice. In her attitude towards him she displays the independence and sense of emancipation that she finds reconcilable with true passion, love, tenderness. In good time she has a child, a boy, and her adroitness in reaching her most sacred ambition—that of giving her own name to the child—is convincing proof that women are superior to men—if not in the letter, at least in the spirit. Amedée is nonplussed when he learns of Annik's trick, he obtains from her permission to give him his name also, but his "amour-propre" has been wounded deeply. His love for Annik wins the battle, he admires in her what other men would hate, he worships her for that which might have been her damnation, and she justifies herself on the ground of what she considers her duty, using the general terms of explanation that women cherish: for the future of the race, for the good of the party, for the carrying out of fecund ideas, for the rehabilitation of women; hers is unselfishness carried to extreme, life spoiled for an ideal. Annik is not the only example of *union libre* that M. Margueritte has offered to our admiration. A few couples, scattered through the novel, give striking proof that there can exist no unhappiness outside the bonds of matrimony, and his thesis attempts to be more convincing by portrayal of the misery, the base instincts and the free play of such instincts in every one of the married couples that M. Margueritte throws into his novel for good measure of what he considers *preuves convaincantes*. There is, however, a limit to human credulity, and there is possibly no sane individual who will agree with the author that every marriage is a failure, and every *union libre* the road to unaltered happiness. The example and fate of Paule, Annik's sister, are the most improbable, artificial, counterfeit and inartistic that any writer could depict; Paule has no place in a regulated world, she is a potential lunatic, and she falls short as a pattern, for there are few independent girls, of the present day, whose desire for a husband—for the sake of being married—is

so urgent as to make them accept the first brute that happens along their way; and Paule was a working girl whose experiences, trials, tribulations and hardships would have made her wise if she had had other background than a *pot-au-feu* make-up.

The men of the novel are more human than the women; they react in the way which might be expected of their position in the world, their success and their failures, their dominant passions and their inborn fears and temerities. Amedée is eventually converted to Annik's doctrines, but in the mind of the reader he remains a typical upperclass bourgeois, a man of culture and intellectuality, of passions, determinations and traditions, the prototype of the sane and normal background of his country.

"Le Compagnon" has not caused as much adverse criticism as did "La Garçonne." It is not as *osé* and Annik is too true to her type, too dominant, and she steers her boat with too strong and steady a hand to arouse any sentiment of revolt in the reader. What the book lacks most is artistic presentation and a sense of humour—two of the many qualities that M. Margueritte does not possess.

There are, unquestionably, such girls as Monique after she became transformed into "La Garçonne" in all countries and in all social strata. They are not typical of any class or of any social order. Also, they are not normal and they do not conform to the biological norm. They are congenitally lacking in moral sensibility. M. Margueritte committed an artistic crime when he made Monique a kind of dual personality which does not exist; when he painted her as a normal girl up to twenty, then gave her the reactions of a moral imbecile, and left the reader to infer at the close of the book that she had once more returned to normality, after her debauch had concluded in finding the right man. Her story is not the story of the development of personality, or of righting herself through her experiences. It is a yarn based upon a complete change of

personality without loss of sanity, or other symptoms pointing to what is known as dual personality. Such transformation in character does not occur.

M. Margueritte's psychology, as embodied in "La Garçonne," is, however, consistent with the theories of feminism. The earnest feminist with ideals believes theoretically that the highest and broadest development of women is synonymous with the greatest freedom from restraints. Remove all impedimenta and the body will grow strong and beautiful, as nature intended it should grow. Why not the soul? But where begin to distinguish between impedimenta and clothing? Are naked souls desirable in the market-places and common thoroughfares of life?

Obviously, the theory has its limitations to be either sane or workable. But taking it in its sane and practical interpretation, the most idealistic plea the feminist can make is: give women freedom to grow into their best possibilities. By all means, give it to them. But what is this freedom? In theory it is the freedom to be themselves; in practice the feminist movement has worked it out up to this time as a tendency to claim for women whatever rights men have heretofore reserved to themselves. If imitation is the sincerest flattery, the male of to-day may well add to his self-esteem a large tribute from the stronghold of feminism. The feminists may dream of "higher possibilities"; what they have actually demanded has been "equal rights"; and the pragmatic application of their demands has been the right to do everything that men have been allowed to do. If one admits such a thing as original sin or human nature, it requires little discernment to explain why the imitation has been almost exclusively along the line of masculine vices, instead of masculine virtues—if there are any —which some militant feminists will probably deny in loud voices.

To him, or her, who denies my charge that such imitation of the coveted "rights" of their brothers is the actual goal

toward which feminism is headed, my answer is "La Garçonne." Monique's reaction to the injustice of the world—that is, her fiancé and her parents—is not the reaction of a normal young girl, French or of any other nationality on the globe, unconsciously seeking to right herself through her experience. It is, however, the logical and the actual reaction of the feminist movement to the injustice, real or fancied, to which hated, envied and admired man has been privileged to subject women for untold ages.

Monique is not a flesh-and-blood girl; she is the impersonation of the theories of feminism. That is where M. Margueritte's psychology goes wrong. It is the psychology of a movement, not of a human being. And just as surely as the application of these theories to one normal girl fails because it falls foul of nature, so must the applications of the theories of feminism, in the last analysis, fail for the same reason. They are built up through a careful system of logic based upon a false premise. And when normal, right-minded women follow the arguments step by step to their logical conclusion and come face to face with the so-called "single standard" for the sexes, unveiled, they are going to be certain to repudiate it, as any normal girl would be to refuse to become the kind of "garçonne" pictured in M. Margueritte's novel. They may struggle to their last breath—and die hopeful—in an effort to bring men to a "single standard" of their own creation; just as any normal Monique might have forgiven Lucien seventy times seven and continued to hope for his ultimate reformation; or, on the contrary, might have turned cynic when she discovered the preference of swine for acorns rather than pearls; or have revolted against the whole sex at the sight of her idol in the mud; or have taken to religion, ambition, work or a "brilliant" marriage; or have reacted in any of the countless other ways, according to the mysterious compound of inherited qualities that nature had moulded into her temperament.

But no normal person of any age or temperamental endowment commits suicide, either moral or physical, out of revenge or spite. And no normal women, when they understand what they are doing, are voluntarily going to sacrifice their own self-esteem in order to punish men, or even for the sake of competing with them in some of the market-places of life.

No woman in love with one man can contemplate the possibility of "an affair" with another man. Women are by nature monogamous. Men are not. Women will never effect the transformation by taking thought. Until the end of time, one man's love will satisfy and appease at least nine out of ten of them. And they will be the same in this respect when they have forced the last barrier that impedes their display of every form of physical and intellectual ability and they become as free as the birds of the air. They will still make obeisance to the immutable laws of biology.

In justice to feminist leaders, the outstanding difference between their ideals and the aims of M. Margueritte's books must not be ignored. If their premise is false and their conclusion bound to bring them head-on against the fundamental facts of human nature, they are at least intellectually honest. On the other hand, it is impossible after reading them to escape the conviction that the author has sacrificed psychology, art and his place in the Legion of Honour for the sake of writing books which should become "best-sellers" by appealing to a taste for the lowest and cheapest form of sensationalism.

That there is a large public ready to seize any bait labelled "The worst thing you ever read," there is no denying. This public is not amenable to reason or criticism. Disapproval merely whets its appetite. The only immunity one can offer it against the evils of such books as "La Garçonne" and "Le Compagnon" is a warning that their morals are spurious, their psychology false, their art a distortion. Read such books it will. Something is won for decency and for art if it can be

persuaded to read them as "trash—not to be taken seriously."

It is a long jump from what M. Margueritte believes to be the sex that is seeking dominancy to the Dominant Sex portrayed by Mathilde and Mathias Vaerting, two learned, credulous, humourless souls who have written a book with this title.

They believe that there are no such things as "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics. They have convinced themselves that those physical, mental, moral or social traits, habits and customs which most of us call "masculine" are simply those of the dominant sex, and that those we call "feminine" are merely the characteristics of a subordinated sex. The biological differences between the sexes in man are negligible, so far as they have any influence upon their social status. This social status is determined by the ideas prevalent at the time which in their turn help to determine much of the difference in social function between the sexes. It is very apparent, despite their wide reading, they have never read Huxley's essay "Emancipation Black and White."

Their book is interesting and suggestive and is sure to be read by students of anthropology, comparative psychology and sociology, and by feminist fans. That unclassifiable individual, "the general reader," will find it diverting, and if he can put its dogmatic statements through a fine sieve constructed of knowledge and common sense he will find it instructive for it contains an amazing amount of information of various ancient and primitive civilisations.

The Vaertings believe that there is not a single "masculine quality" which cannot be paralleled as a "feminine quality" in the history of one race or another. Among the Koreans an "old bachelor" is refused the title of man, and receives the contumelious name of "jatau." That may not be quite as bad as it sounds, but among the Santals he is compared with thieves and witches, and in Sparta he was not only deprived of civil rights, but at certain times in Winter he had to walk through the market place totally nude singing a song descrip-

tive of his shame. It could be cold in Sparta, too. Up to the present I have been in favour of eliminating old bachelors by constitutional amendment, having been an attentive observer of the success attending operation of the more recent additions to our marvellous Gubernatorial apparatus, but now I believe the Spartan method would be more efficient. "Old maid" as a term of contempt has lost its sting. No male, it matters not how "dominant," would think he could derogate the chief ornament of cultural literature in America by calling her an old maid, could detract from the serenity, dignity, womanliness and saintliness of Chicago's most valued citizen by similar appellation or would dare mention the word in the presence of Miss Amy Lowell.

Women by and large, feminists and anti-feminists, will resent and deny such statements as, "Even to-day we can see quite clearly that the value placed upon pre-conjugal chastity is an outcome of the monosexual dominance." Few, save Bolsheviki and other radicals, deny that chastity is a virtue. Virtue is still its own reward, but most people believe that they will be rewarded in the hereafter for display of it, and hence it is for them their most carefully guarded possession. This is not a man's belief, but the belief that has been engendered in a man through contact with women of education and ignorance, or morality and immorality, Christian and pagan, white, black and yellow, and extending over more years than he cares to recall. Nor is it admitted that any writer is justified in such a statement as this: "It is a familiar fact that in modern civilised countries under masculine domination a duplex sexual morality prevails . . . the men have preferential rights." Infringement of the monogamic principle and consortion outside of marriage is against the laws of God and man. Because that law is broken does not make it less the law, and to hint or state that such infraction of the law is universal is to bear false witness.

As an example of the authors' credulity, which is more than

childish, and of their readiness to accept rumour as fact we quote: "Duplex morality necessarily leads to prostitution . . . In States where the sexes have equal rights, such as Wyoming, there is no prostitution." Could anything be more absurd? If the Vaertings know as little of the comparative psychology of men and women as they do about what goes on in the State of Wyoming their knowledge is not burdensome.

One of the most distressing things attending the advancement of women toward the goal of their rights, that is their equality with man, is that they are losing those qualities and ancillae popularly spoken of as "feminine" and, worse yet, in proportion as they shed them, men acquire, absorb and display them. It is in this country where the movement toward equal sexes is further advanced than in Europe that it is most noticeable, worse luck. "Of late in the United States, with the further progress of the trend toward equal rights, the assimilation between the sexes in respect of dress and coiffure is still more manifest. We learn that there is a club whose members wear the same dress." (It must be a bathing club.) "The American women can wear trousers or breeches as they please." I say they can't. One woman succeeded in doing it, but the price she paid was so exorbitant that it has discouraged the other two in "the States" who wanted to wear them. All the others are content to wear diaphanous stockings and abbreviated skirts in Winter and sleeveless gowns and expensive furs in Summer. "We read to-day that English women are able without being mobbed to cut their hair short and to go about their business wearing breeches and square-toed shoes." We suspect there is some "poison" literature going from England into Germany now and we suggest to the Herr Doktor and the Frau Doktor that they should not believe all they read. Still, one can do a lot in England without being mobbed, especially if you do it "going about your business." You can even do a lot without being molested when you are going about

some one's else business. Witness the gatherings in Hyde Park any Sunday afternoon hearkening to the words of a body-betterer or a soul-saver.

"The dominant sex raises the chief objections to such changes in dress." I venture again to disagree. Although we do not for a moment admit the justness of the charge that we are money worshippers, or that we display the first symptoms of money madness, it is allowed that as a people we are thrifty. At present, when we have to make sacrifices or change our scale of living that we may be able to pay our income tax, it would be very acceptable to save a few hundreds or few thousands every year on hair dressers, beauty generators, beauty mediators and beauty preservers, not to speak of dressmakers, corsetières, etc.

I am able to join the Vaertings in the hope that as the march of equal rights for the sexes progresses, the time will come when "the clothing of men and women will combine tasteful beauty with useful simplicity." We also venture the hope that such clothing will be buttonless or moderately so. The little sympathy we have had left, after giving full complement to our friends who have not motor-cars so that they can get into the country or to the beaches on Sunday, has always gone out to the shade of the man who left a note saying that the only thing that reconciled him to his overt act was that it put an end to buttoning and unbuttoning.

The authors of this book are far more acceptable as prophets than as witnesses. Their answer to the question, What changes are likely to ensue when women acquire equal rights with men? which is, of course, in the field of prophecy, is interesting and intriguing. "There is no serious reason to expect that family life will be profoundly disordered by the liberation of women; on the contrary, we may anticipate that it will attain a climax of intimacy and happiness . . . The dread of a decline in sex-morality is perhaps even more ill-founded . . . The morality of sexual equality will betoken a higher stage of ethical de-

velopment than the duplex sexual morality characteristic of monosexual dominance."

It depends upon what is meant by ethical development. The Greeks in the time of Plato were convinced that they had an ethical development that had never been approximated. In the Phædrus, the Symposium, the Charmides and the Republic, in which the real Socrates is dramatised, Plato gave liberal scope to his personal sympathy for a sex conduct that would not meet approval to-day and which I hinted in the opening sentence of this essay had much to do with the downfall of Greece.

The authors conclude that no civilisation can reach its highest development under a monosexual government, and that the ideal government is one in which the sexes are absolutely equal. I maintain there is not the slightest evidence that would have weight with any jury of scientific men and women to show that "the modern trend toward equal rights for the sexes is unquestionably accompanied by a reduction in the intensity of sex differentiation."

The psychological differences between the sexes in man to-day are what they were a hundred or a thousand years ago. They are, apart from the mark of sex, difference of size, bodily proportions, amount, distribution and manner of growth of hair, size of bones and extremities, voice. And the mental differences are even more conspicuous.

The bodies of the two sexes are different after the ovaries and testes have acted upon them and so the same environment causes different responses in the two different glandular complexes. If we got the embryonic matrix early enough before the germ-glands had arisen and removed the germinal anlage then the two neuter embryos which had been distinct ♂ & ♀ would have developed into exactly similar things. But it is a little late to leave it to social custom and environment to bring about the equilisation.

Biologists have shown that men and women, from the mo-

ment of fertilisation, differ in every cell of their body in regard to the number of their chromosomes, those marvellous bearers of heredity, conditioners of character, determiners of our qualities. They have also shown that a male mammal after birth may be made in many respects physically and mentally female by removing its reproductive organs and engrafting those of the female and vice-versa. The brain that the animal starts with is neutral, it is virginal soil; the internal secretions of the testes or ovaries masculinise it or feminise it, and unless these organs shall one day go the way of the vermiform appendix, so long will there continue to be the most striking of all differences between the sexes—a temperamental one.

XVIII

LUNATICS OF LITERATURE

NOTHING is more enigmatic than insanity. How "queer" may one be and yet not merit the designation of lunatic? It is beyond doubt that a grand jury would deprive John Webster of his liberty, and it is highly probable that a judge would instruct a petit jury to find Lorenz Lubota insane rather than guilty of participating in the robbery and murder of his aunt. But it is not likely that Mr. Sherwood Anderson or Herr Gerhart Hauptmann had the smallest intention of portraying lunacy. Their purpose was to depict a reformer and a reformed respectively, and incidentally to make an artistic job of it.

The lure of insanity for the popular imagination has received ample testimony since the creation of Don Quixote and Hamlet. The mentality of the latter has probably occupied more printed space than that of any other person, real or imaginary.

When "Jane Eyre" was written, insanity was a rare subject for the novelist. Since then it has had increasing popularity. Ibsen found that morbid mental states furnished a fertile field for the study of personality and its problems, and Dostoievsky set a standard for the fictional interpretation of the diseased mind which has never been approached either by novelist or dramatist. Stavrogin, of "The Possessed," is a picture of psychopathic personality without a rival, and the genesis and display of acute delirium has never been so masterfully delineated or so comprehensively presented as in Ivan Karamazov. Leonid Andreyev created many characters whose conduct suggests mental imbalance. Conduct that would be considered

irrational in an Anglo-Saxon would be entirely within the bounds of normality displayed by a Russian. In the story, "A Thought," Doctor Kerzhentzev murders the husband of the woman he loves, and pretends insanity that he may escape punishment. Suddenly the idea occurs to him that he may be insane, that he really is insane. The Academy of Medicine at Saint Petersburg devotes one of its séances to his case and the decision is that he is insane. The truth is he was insane medically, but sane legally. Andreyev's contributions were not needed to prove there is no definite dividing line between sanity and insanity; there is a sort of no-man's land between the two in which it is quite safe for any one to carry on to his heart's content. But he must go back frequently to the adjacent territory if he wishes to be counted in with the inhabitants of either country. The works of Zola, Daudet, de Maupassant and other of their contemporaries and successors are rich in insane and psychopathic character. It is, however, within the last two decades, since the "New Psychology" has been presented in such a way as to make leading appeal, that the insane have come into their own in literature designed for general consumption.

Psychiatry, or morbid psychology, is the most popular branch of medicine to-day with the layman, and the most unpopular with the physician. Yet most of the stories of the past ten years would testify that their writers had never set foot in an institution for the insane nor made the acquaintance of any of the inmates, some of whom are presumably models for their characters. In fiction, with a few notable exceptions, insane people are utilised in any way in which they may aid the development of the plot or express the convictions of the author.

No one has ever been able to define insanity satisfactorily. There is no reason for believing that it will ever be accomplished. Nevertheless, the term will continue to be used derogatively and diagnostically. Insanity results in, or is the result of, disorder of personality. It is manifest in thought or

in conduct or in both. The individual whose personality disorder is confined to thought is not considered a lunatic by the law or by his neighbours, although he may be the victim of definite mental disease. He does become a lunatic when his conduct is at variance with that which we recognise as normal, proper, good, safe, legitimate. That is, he does in actual life, but not in fiction. For instance, any man in any community who would act as John Webster acted when he put the picture of the Virgin on the bureau of his room, lighted the candles and began to prance about the room nude, apostrophising it, and later got his wife and daughter clad in night-gowns into the room while he regaled them with a narrative of his sin and sensuality—gloating surreptitiously over his daughter's physical charms—would be considered insane. But John Webster is the apostle of a new faith, a faith which says, "The body is my tabernacle; I love and revere it; I respect and protect it. It was given to me to be the instrument upon which are played the harmonies of life's joys. For it the birds sing, the green spreads itself over the earth in the spring, for it the cherry trees in the orchards bloom. I worship it particularly because it is so concupiscible." If, however, Mr. Webster—or his wife or daughter—had sought my professional opinion, I should have been obliged to inform him that not only was he a lunatic, but that he should be deprived of his liberty for the good of the community. He could probably find others, experts even, who would not agree with me. But there are few things upon which the whole world agrees. Perhaps the only one is that Will Rogers is a humourist.

One of the best studies in literature of a "shut-in" personality and of the form of insanity known as dementia præcox is in "Midnight Confession," by M. Georges Duhamel. It is the self-revelation of a man to a casual stranger whom he encounters at the moment when his long pent-up ego bursts the flood-gates of his habitual, even pathological self-suppression, and reveals itself in all its nakedness of spirit. Up to this time

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his psychosis, which may or may not have been suspected by his neighbours on account of his "queer" conduct, may be said to have been incubating. When his outburst takes the form of his "midnight confession" we know that he is insane.

A small clerk in an office yields to an impulse to lay his finger upon the ear of his employer, just to assure himself that the man is made of flesh and blood. Society is more afraid of a lunatic than of a criminal, so the man is thrown out of the office in disgrace. His story is one of rapid deterioration, both materially and mentally. Self-pity, self-absorption and lack of initiative paralyse effort and permit his natural egocentricity to bear in more and more closely upon him, until it goads him into his "confession," with the statement that, on account of his failure in every relation in life, he renounces everything—home, his old mother who has been supporting him, the young woman whose sympathy has been offered him —the "whole show." He does not suggest suicide, nor any destination. He merely leaves the reader with the impression that he is ready to become a custodial case in an institution for the insane for life.

In interesting contrast with this story is an English novel published shortly before "Midnight Confession," by a writer who has not achieved any great vogue in America, Mr. William Caine. It is called "The Strangeness of Noel Carton." A young man who has married a vulgar woman for money will keep a diary and write a novel. He creates ideal individuals to hate and to love. In his fiction he cuts an irresistible figure, instead of the drab and contemptible one of real life. Most of his heroics are suggested and developed in dreams, but gradually he ceases to differentiate between dream work and conscious production. Soon he identifies persons in the flesh with his imaginary creations and carries on with the latter in his actions. This prompts his wife to suspect his sanity. He discovers the draft of a letter from her to her solicitor which convinces him that he is going to be confined in a mad-

house. The wife enters the room and he shoots her with a loaded pistol which he has discovered in her desk.

Were it possible for a writer to depict an insane person who did not display any features of insanity, Mr. Caine should have succeeded with this novel. Noel Carton was strange, but he was not insane. His flight from reality was an interesting experiment. It was an index of sanity to have undertaken it.

In certain cases of precocious and late dementias the victim harbours and publishes the delusion that he has committed the crime that everybody is reading about and that the police and District Attorney are seeking to trace to its perpetrator. It is within the recollection of nearly every newspaper reader that a few years ago, when New York was thrilling with one of its many unsolved murders, a young man, at the moment in Canada, confessed that he was the murderer of the well known sportsman and authority on auction bridge. That man is now, or was until recently at least, an inmate of the Manhattan State Hospital. Mr. Sherwood Anderson, in a story called "Brothers," made such a delusion the focus of a brief narrative.

Mrs. Edith Wharton has spun an interesting tale around the reverse side of this in "The Bolted Door." In that case Granice had murdered his mother's cousin, but his whole life denied it so convincingly that his confession to friend, District Attorney, or the press was considered a delusion. Apparently he did not even have an enemy or an ill-wisher in the community, for no one believed him. After he had been shut up in an asylum for some time his statement was found to be true. The reader is led to surmise that he was then insane. He was, but no more insane than when he committed the crime.

One of the best presentations of hallucinosis associated with exhaustion in fiction is a short story by Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, called "The Yellow Wallpaper." The wife of a distinguished physician steeped in materialism becomes soon after childbirth "run down" and "threatened with nervous

prostration." A long-unoccupied country place is taken for the summer. She is sentimental, romantic, imaginative. Her husband is literal, specific, standardised. She has never admitted, even to herself, that his virtues at times weigh heavily upon her. The draft of the furnace in which she attempts to sublimate her libido is writing a record of her thoughts. The lure of the supernatural had made her want to fasten a ghost-story upon the house, but there was no legend. So she finds a substitute for a ghost.

"I don't like our room a bit. . . . The paper is stripped off in big patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room. I never saw a worse paper in my life. One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin. . . . The colour is repellent, almost revolting, a smouldering unclean yellow, strongly faded by the slow-turning sunlight."

Her mind reverts constantly to the wallpaper until it becomes the centre of her existence. "There are things in that paper nobody knows but me, or ever will. Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day. It's always the same shape, only very numerous . . . and it's like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern."

The woman who is creeping about is herself, seeking to avoid further "encounter with opposition," striving to get "more society and stimulus," aiming to thwart "schedule" for each hour in the day and "specificity," clamouring for freedom, for responsibility, for opportunity to exercise her wings that she may soar into the empyrean of romance, that she may hover securely over the seas of reality, that she may alight safely in the isles where life and strife hold out their arms.

She next discovers that the front pattern moves. The woman behind shakes it, and at night she comes out and crawls. Finally, the furniture is moved from the room in preparation for leaving the house, but she refuses to go and locks the door and throws the key of the room out of the window. John comes

and finds her creeping. "I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder. 'I've got out at last,' I said, 'in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back.' Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time."

Mrs. Gilman's story embodies the fact that visual hallucinations are most likely and frequent at night, or in the dark; that they often follow in the wake of exhaustion from disease or stress; that in the beginning they are apt to be shadowy and to achieve continuousness and plasticity very gradually. It sets forth with extraordinary lucidity the phenomenon of "identification."

"Old Crow," by Miss Alice Brown, is one of the new books which feature insanity, or supposed insanity, in the development of a plot, rather than as a study of personality. Tenney, an ignorant New England farmer, is considered eccentric by the neighbours. He is a religious fanatic and subject to violent fits of jealousy in which he threatens to kill his baby. During these attacks Tira, his wife, flees to the woods with the baby, always returning after a few hours to find Tenney quaking with fear and humility lest she will not come back or has killed herself. During one of her flights to the mountain she meets Raven, the middle-aged rich man of the countryside who, satiated with city life, prosperity, war experiences and a sense of personal futility, has gone to his old home to rest. He is attracted by Tira's extraordinary beauty and evident terror, invites her into his studio, a hut on the mountain, and tells her to use it as a refuge. She accepts and goes there many times. Tenney's suspicions have been attached entirely to a man who has been associated with Tira's past and who still pursues her, partly from attraction and partly to bedevil Tenney, to whom she is entirely loyal, although she does not love him. He, however, transfers them to Raven, whose interest in Tira, although innocent, is evident. In one of his rages Tenney

takes a shot at a man whom he mistakes for Raven, and in another he smothers the baby with a pillow. Tira tells the doctor that she has "overlaid" the infant, and after it is buried her body is found in the water near a slippery stone crossing. Tenney, overcome with remorse and fear, gives himself up to the authorities and confesses the murder of the child, but nobody believes him and he is acquitted as "crazed" by grief over the death of wife and child. He then drowns himself at the place where Tira's body had been found.

He was no more "crazed" by grief than he had been by jealousy. Jealousy is the pattern of insanity, but neither judges nor juries will commit a man or woman who is swayed by it, no matter how "insane" the jealousy is. Tira's past did not bear close scrutiny. Although we are assured of her faithfulness and loyalty to Tenney, her conduct with Raven was, to say the least, indiscreet and lent itself to misconstruction. Even an emotionally equilibrated husband would have had his suspicions aroused, particularly if haunted by the thought that his wife did not love him. Nothing testified Tenney's insanity so unqualifiedly as his suicide. Sane Anglo-Saxons do not kill themselves.

The same theme is used in "Ellen Levis," by Miss Elsie Singmaster. Although the suspicions of the jealous wife, Hilda Lanfair, have no shadow or semblance of foundation—sheer delusions created out of a mind whose sole interest was the justification of a morbid emotional condition—and there is a history of insanity in her family, the alienist of the novel will not commit her until after she has attempted violence by substituting ammonia for the eyewash intended for a woman to whom she has taken an absurd dislike. Even then the reader is given no convincing evidence of the alleged dementia. Hilda is of low-grade mentality coupled with dominant passions, and has been spoiled by wealth and indulgence—a cheap and tawdry type. In a book significant for otherwise fine characterisation, she is entirely lacking in

the distinction that marks the baffled human souls struggling for expression in "The Yellow Wallpaper" and in "Brothers," and fails to arouse any response in the reader save that of pitying repulsion. Indeed, the picture presented of her would justify a question as to whether intelligence tests would have rated her as slightly above or slightly below the line that divides a stupid individual from a moron.

It is remarkable that no one has depicted paranoia, reasoning insanity, in fiction, save Dr. George L. Walton who, a few years ago, published a novel, "The Paranoiac." The author, one of the prominent neurologists of this country, naturally gave an accurate description of its development and display.

The victim of paranoia has an organised body of knowledge (false) which usually colours his whole life and sooner or later conditions his conduct. His reasoning is acute and logical, but as his premises are false, his conclusions are false. There are plenty of characters in literature that have what are called paranoiac minds, frequently spoken of as "twists," but these are to be compared with individuals who have periods of exaltation and depression. The latter are what are called the manic-depressive type of individuals, but they are by no means victims of mental disease.

Countless efforts have been made in recent fiction to paint psychopathic personalities of all shades, but there are few pictures of the commonest class of insanities, the manic-depressive insanities. In "They Who Question," published anonymously in 1914, which tries to answer the question, "Does God send suffering as punishment for sin?" there is a minor character who becomes insane. He is the only child of an intelligent and worldly woman who has become embittered against God and man because her husband has succumbed to hereditary insanity and she confidently believes that her son will likewise suffer as he approaches maturity. Reggie, the son, is an attractive, gracious boy, apparently quite normal. But at sixteen he is sent home from Eton on account

of a "nervous breakdown" which is credited to have been precipitated by a slight fire in his room. From an obsession to set fires he goes into acute mania, and the narrative is evidently of an actual occurrence.

In popular parlance "nervous breakdown" is a euphemism for either the exalted or the depressed phase of the mental disorder now called the manic-depressive psychosis, or for dementia præcox. Reggie may have been the victim of either, but his final gesture, jumping into the flames of his burning house, after having set it on fire, as well as the cleverness and resourcefulness he displayed in concealing kerosene oil, suggests the first mentioned disease.

As a case of chronic mania Bertha Mason, of "Jane Eyre," has no rival in recent fiction. Although her appearances are few and her *métier* is to produce suspense in the plot and to play a mystery and horror rôle similar to that of the spectre in ghost stories, not only is her behaviour true to type, but what is revealed of the nature of her disease is convincing. She is a purely objective creation—a mere picture. Modern fictionists specialising in insanity want to make analytic studies usually. Probably this is the reason so few have essayed mania, which might be correctly painted from a live model if the painter were satisfied with a picture and did not aspire to interpretation. Not that an interpretive study, if accurate, might not be uniquely interesting. The ideal novel portraying an insane hero or heroine remains to be written by a man or woman gifted with creative imagination and artistic expression who has recovered from one or more attacks of manic-depressive insanity.

M. Paul Morand, who has been sketching imaginary international figures, men and women, has depicted general paresis in "La Nuit de Portofine Kulm," the opening sketch in the volume entitled "Fermé la Nuit." O'Patah is a composite of Oscar Wilde, Eamon de Valera, Gabriele d' Annunzio, doubly dedicated—as poet and Irishman—to ridicule, to mis-

fortune and to sublimity. M. Morand says that "his organic disorders followed the typical course of his disease." But he makes O'Patah talk and act in a way that would be quite impossible for a victim of general paresis. He does, however, in a masterly way which meets the extreme exigencies of both art and science, foreshadow in the opening scene of the episode the disease which is soon to fasten upon O'Patah, first crippling his faculties and then causing his death. Here, in the Royal Suite at the Waldorf, surrounded by an ante-room full of reporters, and bombarded with telegrams and scented notes, the hero-poet, with the vanity of a tenor idol, the brawn of a Samson and the pompousness of a political boss, receives the sculptor interested in making a bust of him, in a scene of utter confusion. Like the opening notes of a symphony, the disarray of the room in which the reader first sees O'Patah is an index of the more general and essential confusion of which he is later to be a witness. The room in which a person of abnormal mentality lives is as significant of his disease as his speech or his conduct.

Mrs. Katharine Fullerton Gerould is given to portraying individuals who are burdened with one form of psychopathy or another, but they are rarely, if ever, insane. In "Bluebonnet," a short story in the volume called "Valiant Dust," Millicent—who has all the family nerves—has visual hallucinations which condition an aberrant conduct, but in reality she can laugh at them and explain their genesis. Her husband, a lawyer with a single-track mind, is so engrossed in his profession that he has no time to companion his wife and to effect a communal life with her, though he is profoundly solicitous of her health. When she writes to her brother, a pompous, self-sufficient, arbitrary individual, that she has been surrounded by strange people including a most dreadful little girl in a blue sunbonnet who goes about and hits the furniture with her hard little knuckles and who is in every way impish, and gives a circumstantial account of their visits to her, both her

husband and brother are profoundly concerned lest she be developing insanity. Her husband receives the letter from her brother and informs Millicent of it, and she tells him at once that it was a joke which she wanted to play on "the pompous fool George." He is at once reassured and turns to the engrossments of his profession, leaving Millicent to her own devices. She has, however, found that engrossments for her are not teas at the golf club and visits of indolent women, but the creations of her own imagination.

So she turns to them again, rather than to colourless diversions that her husband thinks should be sufficient to fill her life. And this time she carries the play to a far greater extent, for she now begins to believe in their reality herself, and she goes some lengths to deepen her own conviction, even so far as to buy the gingham in the village to make the blue bonnet for the impish little girl, and to pour tea into each of the six cups which she had laid for her party, and to wet the spoons, so that the maid might be convinced that her invisible acquaintances had been there in reality. Her husband then sends for an alienist, and I doubt not that he told him, after getting the facts of the case, and sizing up the husband, that Bluebonnet was a wish-fulfilment on the genesic side of Millicent's nature and that the other five were attempts at fictitious fulfilment of her craving for contact with people who had done something in the world, who were doing something in the world, who had time to talk about their accomplishments and their failures, to laugh at them and lament them.

In "The Clean Heart," by Mr. A. S. M. Hutchinson, the hero is evidently intended to become insane in the early chapters of the book. He has spent his youth up to thirty working for other people and suppressing himself, and although a successful man he is restive and ill at ease. He is possessed with the idea of satisfying himself, but doesn't know what he wants. One day he leaves his office (he is an editor and also a successful novelist) and is pursued by his double, jumps off a bridge

into water, is fished out, runs nowhere in particular and falls in with a cheerful tramp, joins him and becomes a hobo, gets rid of his double, enjoys life and tries all available kinds of selfishness, and finally returns home a normal man.

This is an attempt at fulfilment vastly inferior to that of Mr. Polly, who was not overdrawn and whose behaviour was in the nature of the possible, while the hero of "The Clean Heart" was labelled a lunatic and made to behave as a philosopher taking a needed vacation.

Miss May Sinclair has drawn insane persons true to life, although they are always minor actors in her dramas, her chief characters being let off with milder aberrations. In the psychopathic family of "Mary Olivier," Aunt Charlotte, though moving in a vague background, playing with dolls and pets and giving them away preparatory to an imaginary marriage, moves convincingly as a dement; while the brother who is sent to America and returns with delusions of having committed cruel acts while there, has fallen a victim to the hereditary taint.

One of the best high-grade feeble-minded characters in fiction is the boy in Miss Willa Cather's "Paul's Case"; while the late crop of novels has produced psychopathic personalities of many varieties, some of whom are purported by the author or supposed by most readers to be insane, such as the father, a monster of cruelty and religious fanaticism, in "Mary Lee," by Geoffrey Dennis, and the "Mad Messiah" in "The Ragged Messenger," by W. B. Maxwell who, after having been an epileptic in youth, developed the belief that he was divinely inspired. In a recent novel, "The Orissers," Mr. L. H. Myers has sketched an interesting psychopath, Cosmo, who quickly got beyond his creator's control.

A unique study of psychopathic personality in literature has come from Italy, "Un Uomo Finito." In it Signor Giovanni Papini has given a revelation of his morbid childhood, his raging adolescence, his furious flights from reality, his near-de-

lusions of grandeur which led him to aspire to omnipotence but to fall short of being able to believe himself a god, and his descent into the depths of depression, as these states have never been offered in a single volume or the record of a single life. It is admittedly autobiographic and Signor Papini's present piety fits in admirably with the personality.

An open question remains as to whether or not the great advance in the study of morbid psychology witnessed by the present age has been or is being reflected in the fiction of the same period; whether, with the widespread interest in the subject, any of the psychopathic creations of modern novelists surpass in understanding, in presentation or in power of appeal those of Dostoievsky, Ibsen, de Maupassant and other writers of the past century.

It is desirable that we should become saner both as individuals and as nations. That we are becoming less so as individuals the statistics of institutions for the insane would seem to prove; that we are becoming less so as nations needs no proof, but if it did I could readily supply it. We get the Laocoön grasp on disease when we know whence and how it comes. We await this information in regard to insanity. Meanwhile it only throws sand in the gearbox of the available machinery for finding out about it to create literature in which established facts are misrepresented. If we are going to have insanity in fiction, let us have the real thing.

THE END

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